

Carlyle's heroes as he conceives them—except possibly one or two.

Being a hero with Carlyle consisted in conquering and displacing other heroes. Even if you were a poet, being a hero consisted in a kind of spiritual standing on some other poet's neck. According to Carlyle, one must always be a hero against other men. Modern heroism consists in being a hero with other men. The hero Against comes in the twentieth century to be the hero With, and the modern hero is known, not by cutting his enemies down, but by his absorbing and understanding them. He drinks up what they wish they could do into what he does, or he states what they believe better than they can state it. Combination or co-operation is the tremendous heroism of our present life.

I admit that I would be afraid of Carlyle's heroes having pedestals. They have already—many of them—done a good deal of harm because they have had pedestals, and because they would not get down from them. But mine would.

With a man who is being a hero by co-operation, getting down is part of the heroism. And there is never any real danger in allowing a pedestal for a real hero. He never has time to sit on it.

One sees him always over and over again kicking his pedestal out from under him and using it to batter a world with. As the world does not take to enjoying its heroes' pedestals in this way, a pedestal is quite safe. Most people feel the same about a hero's halo. They prefer to have him wear it like a kind of glare around his head; and if he uses it as a searchlight upon them, if he makes his halo really practical and lights up the world a little around him instead, he is not likely to be spoiled, is almost always safe from any danger of having any more halo crowded upon him than he wants, or than anybody wants him to have. One might put it down as