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# Quotes by Eliot, George

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George Eliot is the pen name of Mary Anne Evans (22 November 1819 - 22 December 1880), who was an English novelist. She was one of the leading writers of the Victorian era. Her novels, largely set in provincial England, are well known for their realism and psychological perspicacity.

She used a male pen name, she said, to ensure that her works were taken seriously. Female authors published freely under their own names, but Eliot wanted to ensure that she was not seen as merely a writer of romances. An additional factor may have been a desire to shield her private life from public scrutiny and to prevent scandals attending her relationship with the married George Henry Lewes.

Renunciation remains sorrow, though a sorrow borne willingly.

- Eliot, George

There is a great deal of unmapped country within us which would have to be taken into account in an explanation of our gusts and storms.

- Eliot, George

In the multitude of middle-aged men who go about their vocations in a daily course determined for them much in the same way as the tie of their cravats, there is always a

good number who once meant to shape their own deeds and alter the world a little.

- Eliot, George

Few women, I fear, have had such reason as I have to think the long sad years of youth were worth living for the sake of middle age.

- Eliot, George

How could a man be satisfied with a decision between such alternatives and under such circumstances? No more than he can be satisfied with his hat, which he's chosen from among such shapes as the resources of the age offer him, wearing it at best with a resignation which is chiefly supported by comparison.

- Eliot, George

Our deeds still travel with us from afar, and what we have been makes us what we are.

- Eliot, George

Our deeds determine us, as much as we determine our deeds.

- Eliot, George

But what we call our despair is often only the painful eagerness of unfed hope.

- Eliot, George

To act with doubleness towards a man whose own conduct was double, was so near an

approach to virtue that it deserved to be called by no meaner name than diplomacy.

- Eliot, George

The sense of an entailed disadvantage -- the deformed foot doubtfully hidden by the shoe, makes a restlessly active spiritual yeast, and easily turns a self-centered, unloving nature into an Ishmaelite. But in the rarer sort, who presently see their own frustrated claim as one among a myriad, the inexorable sorrow takes the form of fellowship and makes the imagination tender.

- Eliot, George

What quarrel, what harshness, what unbelief in each other can subsist in the presence of a great calamity, when all the artificial vesture of our life is gone, and we are all one with each other in primitive mortal needs?

- Eliot, George

There is no despair so absolute as that which comes with the first moments of our first great sorrow, when we have not yet known what it is to have suffered and be healed, to have despaired and have recovered hope.

- Eliot, George

It is never too late to be what you might have been.

- Eliot, George

The reward of one's duty is the power to fulfill another.

- Eliot, George

Those who trust us educate us.

- Eliot, George

The egoism which enters into our theories does not affect their sincerity; rather, the more our egoism is satisfied, the more robust is our belief.

- Eliot, George

You have such strong words at command, that they make the smallest argument seem formidable.

- Eliot, George

No evil dooms us hopelessly except the evil we love, and desire to continue in, and make no effort to escape from.

- Eliot, George

One soweth and another reapeth is a verity that applies to evil as well as good.

- Eliot, George

The presence of a noble nature, generous in its wishes, ardent in its charity, changes the lights for us: we begin to see things again in their larger, quieter masses, and to believe that we too can be seen and judged in the wholeness of our character.

- Eliot, George

Excellence encourages one about life generally; it shows the spiritual wealth of the world.

- Eliot, George

Nothing is so good as it seems beforehand.

- Eliot, George

But human experience is usually paradoxical, that means incongruous with the phrases of current talk or even current philosophy.

- Eliot, George

Is it not rather what we expect in men, that they should have numerous strands of experience lying side by side and never compare them with each other?

- Eliot, George

Blessed is the man who, having nothing to say, abstains from giving us wordy evidence of the fact.

- Eliot, George

There is only one failure in life possible, and that is not to be true to the best one knows.

- Eliot, George

Failure after long perseverance is much grander than never to have a striving good enough to be called a failure.

- Eliot, George

The only failure one should fear, is not hugging to the purpose they see as best.

- Eliot, George

To have in general but little feeling, seems to be the only security against feeling too much on any particular occasion.

- Eliot, George

I at least have so much to do in unraveling certain human lots, and seeing how they were woven and interwoven, that all the light I can command must be concentrated on this particular web, and not dispersed over that tempting range of relevancies called the universe.

- Eliot, George

In the vain laughter of folly wisdom hears half its applause.

- Eliot, George

Would not love see returning penitence afar off, and fall on its neck and kiss it?

- Eliot, George

Best friend, my well-spring in the wilderness!

- Eliot, George

Perhaps the most delightful friendships are those in which there is much agreement, much disputation, and yet more personal liking.

- Eliot, George

Friendships begin with liking or gratitude roots that can be pulled up.

- Eliot, George

Worldly faces never look so worldly as at a funeral. They have the same effect of grating incongruity as the sound of a coarse voice breaking the solemn silence of night.

- Eliot, George

I desire no future that will break the ties with the past.

- Eliot, George

Genius at first is little more than a great capacity for receiving discipline.

- Eliot, George

It's them as take advantage that get advantage I this world.

- Eliot, George

A toddling little girl is a center of common feeling which makes the most dissimilar people understand each other.

- Eliot, George

One must be poor to know the luxury of giving.

- Eliot, George

It seems to me we can never give up longing and wishing while we are thoroughly alive.

There are certain things we feel to be beautiful and good, and we must hunger after them.

- Eliot, George

Breed is stronger than pasture.

- Eliot, George

Gossip is a sort of smoke that comes from the dirty tobacco-pipes of those who diffuse it: it proves nothing but the bad taste of the smoker.

- Eliot, George

She was no longer wrestling with the grief, but could sit down with it as a lasting companion and make it a sharer in her thoughts.

- Eliot, George

The strongest principle of growth lies in human choice.

- Eliot, George

Children demand that their heroes should be freckleless, and easily believe them so: perhaps a first discovery to the contrary is less revolutionary shock to a passionate child than the threatened downfall of habitual beliefs which makes the world seem to totter for us in maturer life.

- Eliot, George

A difference of taste in jokes is a great strain on the affections.

- Eliot, George

Harold, like the rest of us, had many impressions which saved him the trouble of distinct ideas.

- Eliot, George

For what we call illusions are often, in truth, a wider vision of past and present realities --a willing movement of a man's soul with the larger sweep of the world's forces --a movement towards a more assured end than the chances of a single life.

- Eliot, George

Our impartiality is kept for abstract merit and demerit, which none of us ever saw.

- Eliot, George

Strange, that some of us, with quick alternate vision, see beyond our infatuations, and even while we rave on the heights, behold the wide plain where our persistent self pauses and awaits us.

- Eliot, George

Blessed is the influence of one true, loving human soul on another.

- Eliot, George

There are some cases in which the sense of injury breeds -- not the will to inflict injuries and climb over them as a ladder, but -- a hatred of all injury.

- Eliot, George

Of what use, however, is a general certainty that an insect will not walk with his head hindmost, when what you need to know is the play of inward stimulus that sends him hither and thither in a network of possible paths?

- Eliot, George

Most of us who turn to any subject we love remember some morning or evening hour when we got on a high stool to reach down an untried volume, or sat with parted lips listening to a new talker, or for very lack of books began to listen to the voices within, as the first traceable beginning of our love.

- Eliot, George

Keep true, never be ashamed of doing right; decide on what you think is right and stick to

it.

- Eliot, George

Only those who know the supremacy of the intellectual life can understand the grief of one who falls from that serene activity into the absorbing soul-wasting struggle with worldly annoyances.

- Eliot, George

Jealousy is never satisfied with anything short of an omniscience that would detect the subtlest fold of the heart.

- Eliot, George

There is a sort of jealousy which needs very little fire; it is hardly a passion, but a blight bred in the cloudy, damp despondency of uneasy egoism.

- Eliot, George

The sons of Judah have to choose that God may again choose them. The divine principle of our race is action, choice, resolved memory.

- Eliot, George

Kisses honeyed by oblivion.

- Eliot, George

Of a truth, Knowledge is power, but it is a power reined by scruple, having a conscience of what must be and what may be; whereas Ignorance is a blind giant who, let him but wax unbound, would make it a sport to seize the pillars that hold up the long-wrought fabric of human good, and turn all the places of joy as dark as a buried Babylon.

- Eliot, George

Might, could, would --they are contemptible auxiliaries.

- Eliot, George

The finest language is mostly made up of simple unimposing words.

- Eliot, George

When one wanted one's interests looking after whatever the cost, it was not so well for a lawyer to be over honest, else he might not be up to other people's tricks.

- Eliot, George

Life is too precious to be spent in this weaving and unweaving of false impressions, and it is better to live quietly under some degree of misrepresentation than to attempt to remove it by the uncertain process of letter-writing.

- Eliot, George

What do we live for; if it is not to make life less difficult to each other?

- Eliot, George

The golden moments in the stream of life rush past us, and we see nothing but sand; the angels come to visit us, and we only know them when they are gone.

- Eliot, George

The beginning of an acquaintance whether with persons or things is to get a definite outline of our ignorance.

- Eliot, George

Animals are such agreeable friends, they ask no questions, they pass no criticisms.

- Eliot, George

Great feelings will often take the aspect of error, and great faith the aspect of illusion.

- Eliot, George

A supreme love, a motive that gives a sublime rhythm to a woman's life, and exalts habit into partnership with the soul's highest needs, is not to be had where and how she wills.

- Eliot, George

I like not only to be loved, but also to be told that I am loved. I am not sure that you are of the same kind. But the realm of silence is large enough beyond the grave. This is the world of literature and speech and I shall take leave to tell you that you are very dear.

- Eliot, George

For what is love itself, for the one we love best? An enfolding of immeasurable cares which yet are better than any joys outside our love.

- Eliot, George

But that intimacy of mutual embarrassment, in which each feels that the other is feeling something, having once existed, its effect is not to be done away with.

- Eliot, George

Marriage must be a relation either of sympathy or of conquest.

- Eliot, George

Opposition may become sweet to a man when he has christened it persecution.

- Eliot, George

All meanings, we know, depend on the key of interpretation.

- Eliot, George

Men's men: gentle or simple, they're much of a muchness.

- Eliot, George

And when a woman's will is as strong as the man's who wants to govern her, half her strength must be concealment.

- Eliot, George

I should like to know what is the proper function of women, if it is not to make reasons for husbands to stay at home, and still stronger reasons for bachelors to go out.

- Eliot, George

I tell you there isn't a thing under the sun that needs to be done at all, but what a man can do better than a woman, unless it's bearing children, and they do that in a poor make-shift way; it had better ha been left to the men.

- Eliot, George

Where women love each other, men learn to smother their mutual dislike.

- Eliot, George

Errors look so very ugly in persons of small means --one feels they are taking quite a liberty in going astray; whereas people of fortune may naturally indulge in a few delinquencies.

- Eliot, George

A mother's yearning feels the presence of the cherished child even in the degraded man.

- Eliot, George

But the mother's yearning, that completest type of the life in another life which is the

essence of real human love, feels the presence of the cherished child even in the debased, degraded man.

- Eliot, George

Every woman is supposed to have the same set of motives, or else to be a monster.

- Eliot, George

The growing good of the world is partly dependent on unhistorical acts; and that things are not so ill with you and me as they might have been, is half owing to the number who lived faithfully a hidden life, and rest in unvisited tombs.

- Eliot, George

Anger and jealousy can no more bear to lose sight of their objects than love.

- Eliot, George

Certainly, the mistakes that we male and female mortals make when we have our own way might fairly raise some wonder that we're so fond of it.

- Eliot, George

But most of us are apt to settle within ourselves that the man who blocks our way is odious, and not to mind causing him a little of the disgust which his personality excites in ourselves.

- Eliot, George

You may try but you can never imagine what it is to have a man's form of genius in you, and to suffer the slavery of being a girl.

- Eliot, George

There is much pain that is quite noiseless; and vibrations that make human agonies are often a mere whisper in the roar of hurrying existence. There are glances of hatred that stab and raise no cry of murder; robberies that leave man or woman for ever beggared of peace and joy, yet kept secret by the sufferer --committed to no sound except that of low moans in the night, seen in no writing except that made on the face by the slow months of suppressed anguish and early morning tears. Many an inherited sorrow that has marred a life has been breathed into no human ear.

- Eliot, George

Play not with paradoxes. That caustic which you handle in order to scorch others may happen to sear your own fingers and make them dead to the quality of things.

- Eliot, George

Our passions do not live apart in locked chambers but dress in their small wardrobe of notions, bring their provisions to a common table and mess together, feeding out of the common store according to their appetite.

- Eliot, George

With memory set smarting like a reopened wound, a man's past is not simply a dead

history, an outworn preparation of the present: it is not a repented error shaken loose from the life: it is a still quivering part of himself, bringing shudders and bitter flavors and the tinglings of a merited shame.

- Eliot, George

The important work of moving the world forward does not wait to be done by perfect men.

- Eliot, George

I'm proof against that word failure. I've seen behind it. The only failure a man ought to fear is failure of cleaving to the purpose he sees to be best.

- Eliot, George

Perspective, as its inventor remarked, is a beautiful thing. What horrors of damp huts, where human beings languish, may not become picturesque through aerial distance! What hymning of cancerous vices may we not languish over as sublimest art in the safe remoteness of a strange language and artificial phrase! Yet we keep a repugnance to rheumatism and other painful effects when presented in our personal experience.

- Eliot, George

More helpful than all wisdom is one draught of simple human pity that will not forsake us.

- Eliot, George

In spite of his practical ability, some of his experience had petrified into maxims and quotations.

- Eliot, George

Here undoubtedly lies the chief poetic energy: --in the force of imagination that pierces or exalts the solid fact, instead of floating among cloud-pictures.

- Eliot, George

Any coward can fight a battle when he's sure of winning, but give me the man who has pluck to fight when he's sure of losing. That's my way, sir; and there are many victories worse than a defeat.

- Eliot, George

Sir Joshua would have been glad to take her portrait; and he would have had an easier task than the historian at least in this, that he would not have had to represent the truth of change --only to give stability to one beautiful moment.

- Eliot, George

It is seldom that the miserable of the world can help regarding their misery as a wrong inflicted by those who are less miserable.

- Eliot, George

There is nothing that will kill a man so soon as having nobody to find fault with but himself.

- Eliot, George

There is no private life which has not been determined by a wider public life.

- Eliot, George

The best augury of a man's success in his profession is that he thinks it the finest in the world.

- Eliot, George

My own experience and development deepen everyday my conviction that our moral progress may be measured by the degree in which we sympathize with individual suffering and individual joy.

- Eliot, George

Prophecy is the most gratuitous form of error.

- Eliot, George

Among all forms of mistake, prophecy is the most gratuitous.

- Eliot, George

What makes life dreary is the want of a motive.

- Eliot, George

The only failure a man ought to fear is failure in cleaving to the purpose he sees to be best.

- Eliot, George

In all private quarrels the duller nature is triumphant by reason of dullness.

- Eliot, George

Quarrel? Nonsense; we have not quarreled. If one is not to get into a rage sometimes, what is the good of being friends?

- Eliot, George

We must find our duties in what comes to us, not in what might have been.

- Eliot, George

One way of getting an idea of our fellow-countrymen's miseries is to go and look at their pleasures.

- Eliot, George

The intense happiness of our union is derived in a high degree from the perfect freedom with which we each follow and declare our own impressions.

- Eliot, George

Iteration, like friction, is likely to generate heat instead of progress.

- Eliot, George

Blows are sarcasm's turned stupid.

- Eliot, George

In the schoolroom her quick mind had taken readily that strong starch of unexplained rules and disconnected facts which saves ignorance from any painful sense of limpness.

- Eliot, George

It is, I fear, but a vain show of fulfilling the heathen precept, Know thyself, and too often leads to a self-estimate which will subsist in the absence of that fruit by which alone the quality of the tree is made evident.

- Eliot, George

If we had a keen vision and feeling of all ordinary human life, it would be like hearing the grass grow and the squirrel's heart beat, and we should die of that roar which lies on the other side of silence. As it is, the best of us walk about well wadded with stupidity.

- Eliot, George

Speech is often barren; but silence also does not necessarily brood over a full nest. Your still fowl, blinking at you without remark, may all the while be sitting on one addled egg; and when it takes to cackling will have nothing to announce but that addled delusion.

- Eliot, George

Wear a smile and have friends; wear a scowl and have wrinkles. What do we live for if not to make the world less difficult for each other?

- Eliot, George

There is a sort of subjection which is the peculiar heritage of largeness and of love; and strength is often only another name for willing bondage to irremediable weakness.

- Eliot, George

'Tis God gives skill, but not without men's hand: He could not make Antonio Stradivarius's violins without Antonio.

- Eliot, George

It will never rain roses: when we want to have more roses we must plant more trees.

- Eliot, George

Human beings must have action; and they will make it if they cannot find it.

- Eliot, George

It is generally a feminine eye that first detects the moral deficiencies hidden under the dear deceit of beauty.

- Eliot, George

There are various orders of beauty, causing men to make fools of themselves in various styles... but there is one order of beauty which seems made to turn the heads not only of men, but of all intelligent mammals, even of women. It is a beauty like that of kittens, or

very small downy ducks making gentle rippling noises with their soft bills, or babies just beginning to toddle and to engage in conscious mischief --a beauty with which you can never be angry, but that you feel ready to crush for inability to comprehend the state of mind into which it throws you.

- Eliot, George

Human beliefs, like all other natural growths, elude the barrier of systems.

- Eliot, George

Who has not felt the beauty of a woman's arm? The unspeakable suggestions of tenderness that lie in the dimpled elbow, and all the varied gently-lessening curves, down to the delicate wrist, with its tiniest, almost imperceptible nicks in the firm softness.

- Eliot, George

No story is the same to us after a lapse of time; or rather we who read it are no longer the same interpreters.

- Eliot, George

To be candid, in Middlemarch phraseology, meant, to use an early opportunity of letting your friends know that you did not take a cheerful view of their capacity, their conduct, or their position; and a robust candor never waited to be asked for its opinion.

- Eliot, George

He was at a starting point which makes many a man's career a fine subject for betting, if

there were any gentlemen given to that amusement who could appreciate the complicated probabilities of an arduous purpose, with all the possible thwartings and furtherings of circumstance, all the niceties of inward balance, by which a man swings and makes his point or else is carried headlong.

- Eliot, George

Life is measured by the rapidity of change, the succession of influences that modify the being.

- Eliot, George

For character too is a process and an unfolding... among our valued friends is there not someone or other who is a little too self confident and disdainful; whose distinguished mind is a little spotted with commonness; who is a little pinched here and protuberant there with native prejudices; or whose better energies are liable to lapse down the wrong channel under the influence of transient solicitations?

- Eliot, George

What loneliness is more lonely than distrust?

- Eliot, George

Sympathetic people often don't communicate well, they back reflected images which hide their own depths.

- Eliot, George

It was not that she was out of temper, but that the world was not equal to the demands of her fine organism.

- Eliot, George

It is in these acts called trivialities that the seeds of joy are forever wasted, until men and women look round with haggard faces at the devastation their own waste has made, and say, the earth bears no harvest of sweetness -- calling their denial knowledge.

- Eliot, George

Each thought is a nail that is driven In structures that cannot decay; And the mansion at last will be given To us as we build it each day.

- Eliot, George

Our virtues are dearer to us the more we have had to suffer for them. It is the same with our children. All profound affection entertains a sacrifice. Our thoughts are often worse than we are, just as they are often better.

- Eliot, George

Our instructed vagrancy, which has hardly time to linger by the hedgerows, but runs away early to the tropics, and is at home with palms and banyans --which is nourished on books of travel, and stretches the theatre of its imagination to the Zambesi.

- Eliot, George

Vanity is as ill at ease under indifference as tenderness is under a love which it cannot

return.

- Eliot, George

When we get to wishing a great deal for ourselves, whatever we get soon turns into mere limitation and exclusion.

- Eliot, George

People who can't be witty exert themselves to be devout and affectionate.

- Eliot, George

That's what a man wants in a wife, mostly; he wants to make sure one fool tells him he's wise.

- Eliot, George

A woman's heart must be of such a size and no larger, else it must be pressed small, like Chinese feet; her happiness is to be made as cakes are, by a fixed receipt.

- Eliot, George

The happiest women, like the happiest nations, have no history.

- Eliot, George

We women are always in danger of living too exclusively in the affections; and though our affections are perhaps the best gifts we have, we ought also to have our share of the

more independent life -- some joy in things for their own sake. It is piteous to see the helplessness of some sweet women when their affections are disappointed -- because all their teaching has been, that they can only delight in study of any kind for the sake of a personal love. They have never contemplated an independent delight in ideas as an experience which they could confess without being laughed at. Yet surely women need this defense against passionate affliction even more than men.

- Eliot, George

Our words have wings, but fly not where we would.

- Eliot, George

I have the conviction that excessive literary production is a social offence.

- Eliot, George

Ignorance... is a painless evil; so, I should think, is dirt, considering the merry faces that go along with it.

- Eliot, George

We hand folks over to God's mercy, and show none ourselves.

- Eliot, George

No compliment can be eloquent, except as an expression of indifference.

- Eliot, George

I've never any pity for conceited people, because I think they carry their comfort about with them.

- Eliot, George

It is possible to have a strong self-love without any self-satisfaction, rather with a self-discontent which is the more intense because one's own little core of egoistic sensibility is a supreme care.

- Eliot, George

The desire to conquer is itself a sort of subjection.

- Eliot, George

The beginning of compunction is the beginning of a new life.

- Eliot, George

Perhaps his might be one of the natures where a wise estimate of consequences is fused in the fires of that passionate belief which determines the consequences it believes in.

- Eliot, George

When death comes it is never our tenderness that we repent from, but our severity.

- Eliot, George

Our dead are never dead to us, until we have forgotten them.

- Eliot, George

Death is the king of this world: 'Tis his park where he breeds life to feed him. Cries of pain are music for his banquet

- Eliot, George

No great deed is done by falterers who ask for certainty.

- Eliot, George

An election is coming. Universal peace is declared, and the foxes have a sincere interest in prolonging the lives of the poultry.

- Eliot, George

We must not inquire too curiously into motives. they are apt to become feeble in the utterance: the aroma is mixed with the grosser air. We must keep the germinating grain away from the light.

- Eliot, George





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