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Quotes by Melville, Herman

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Herman Melville (August 1, 1819 September 28, 1891) was an American novelist, essayist, and poet. During his lifetime his early novels were popular, but his popularity declined later in his life. By the time of his death he had nearly been forgotten, but his masterpiece, Moby-Dick, was "rediscovered."

Old age is always wakeful; as if, the longer linked with life, the less man has to do with aught that looks like death.

- Melville, Herman

He who has never failed somewhere, that man can not be great.

- Melville, Herman

Faith, like a jackal, feeds among the tombs, and even from these dead doubts she gathers her most vital hope.

- Melville, Herman

There is something wrong about the man who wants help. There is somewhere a deep defect, a want, in brief, a need, a crying need, somewhere about that man.

- Melville, Herman

In our own hearts, we mold the whole world's hereafters; and in our own hearts we fashion our own gods.

- Melville, Herman

Hope is the struggle of the soul, breaking loose from what is perishable, and attesting her eternity.

- Melville, Herman

I feel that the Godhead is broken up like the bread at the Supper, and that we are the pieces. Hence this infinite fraternity of feeling.

- Melville, Herman

Let me look into a human eye; it is better than to gaze into sea or sky; better than to gaze upon God.

- Melville, Herman

We may have civilized bodies and yet barbarous souls. We are blind to the real sights of this world; deaf to its voice; and dead to its death. And not till we know, that one grief outweighs ten thousand joys will we become what Christianity is striving to make us.

- Melville, Herman

When I think of this life I have led; the desolation of solitude it has been; the masoned, walled-town of a Captain's exclusiveness, which admits but small entrance to any sympathy from the green country without -- oh, weariness! heaviness! Guinea-coast

slavery of solitary command!

- Melville, Herman

They talk of the dignity of work. The dignity is in leisure.

- Melville, Herman

For whatever is truly wondrous and fearful in man, never yet was put into words or books.

- Melville, Herman

The lightning flashes through my skull; mine eyeballs ache and ache; my whole beaten brain seems as beheaded, and rolling on some stunning ground.

- Melville, Herman

He says NO! in thunder; but the Devil himself cannot make him say yes.

- Melville, Herman

But it is better to fail in originality than to succeed in imitation.

- Melville, Herman

Let America first praise mediocrity even, in her children, before she praises... the best excellence in the children of any other land.

- Melville, Herman

Why, ever since Adam, who has got to the meaning of this great allegory -- the world?

Then we pygmies must be content to have out paper allegories but ill comprehended.

- Melville, Herman

Look you, Doubloon, your zodiac here is the life of man in one round chapter. To begin: there's Aries, or the Ram -- lecherous dog, he begets us; then, Taurus, or the Bull -- he bumps us the first thing; then Gemini, or the Twins -- that is, Virtue and Vice; we try to reach Virtue, when lo! comes Cancer the Crab, and drags us back; and here, going from Virtue, Leo, a roaring Lion, lies in the path -- he gives a few fierce bites and surly dabs with his paw; we escape, and hail Virgo, the virgin! that's our first love; we marry and think to be happy for aye, when pop comes Libra, or the Scales -- happiness weighed and found wanting; and while we are very sad about that, Lord! how we suddenly jump, as Scorpio, or the Scorpion, stings us in rear; we are curing the wound, when come the arrows all round; Sagittarius, or the Archer, is amusing himself. As we pluck out the shafts, stand aside! here's the battering-ram, Capricornus, or the Goat; full tilt, he comes rushing, and headlong we are tossed; when Aquarius, or the Waterbearer, pours out his whole deluge and drowns us; and, to wind up, with Pisces, or the Fishes, we sleep.

- Melville, Herman

People think that if a man has undergone any hardship, he should have a reward; but for my part, if I have done the hardest possible day's work, and then come to sit down in a corner and eat my supper comfortably --why, then I don't think I deserve any reward for my hard day's work --for am I not now at peace? Is not my supper good?

- Melville, Herman

Let us speak, though we show all our faults and weaknesses, --for it is a sign of strength to be weak, to know it, and out with it -- not in a set way and ostentatiously, though, but incidentally and without premeditation.

- Melville, Herman

How it is I know not; but there is no place like a bed for confidential disclosures between friends. Man and wife, they say, there open the very bottom of their souls to each other; and some old couples often lie and chat over old times till nearly morning. Thus, then, in our hearts honeymoon, lay I and Queequeg -- a cozy, loving pair.

- Melville, Herman

If some books are deemed most baneful and their sale forbid, how, then, with deadlier facts, not dreams of doting men? Those whom books will hurt will not be proof against events. Events, not books, should be forbid.

- Melville, Herman

The consciousness of being deemed dead, is next to the presumable unpleasantness of being so in reality. One feels like his own ghost unlawfully tenanting a defunct carcass.

- Melville, Herman

Toil is man's allotment; toil of brain, or toil of hands, or a grief that's more than either, the grief and sin of idleness.

- Melville, Herman

Give me a condor's quill! Give me Vesuvius crater for an inkstand!

- Melville, Herman

We cannot live only for ourselves. A thousand fibers connect us with our fellow men; and among those fibers, as sympathetic threads, our actions run as courses, and they come back to us as effects.

- Melville, Herman

Some dying men are the most tyrannical; and certainly, since they will shortly trouble us so little for evermore, the poor fellows ought to be indulged.

- Melville, Herman

So, cutting the lashing of the waterproof match keg, after many failures Starbuck contrived to ignite the lamp in the lantern; then stretching it on a waif pole, handed it to Queequeg as the standard-bearer of this forlorn hope. There, then, he sat, holding up that imbecile candle in the heart of that almighty forlornness. There, then, he sat, the sign and symbol of a man without faith, hopelessly holding up hope in the midst of despair.

- Melville, Herman

There is the grand truth about Nathaniel Hawthorne. He says NO! in thunder; but the Devil himself cannot make him say yes. For all men who say yes, lie; and all men who say no, why, they are in the happy condition of judicious, unincumbered travellers in Europe; they cross the frontiers into Eternity with nothing but a carpet-bag, that is to say, the Ego. Whereas those yes-gentry, they travel with heaps of baggage, and, damn them! they will

never get through the Custom House.

- Melville, Herman

Life's a voyage that's homeward bound

- Melville, Herman



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