

**WILLIAM
GEORGE JORDAN**



**SELF-CONTROL,
ITS KINGSHIP
AND MAJESTY**

William George Jordan

Self-Control, Its Kingship and Majesty

Enriched edition.

Introduction, Studies and Commentaries by Peter Boyd

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Introduction

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At the heart of William George Jordan's *Self-Control, Its Kingship and Majesty* lies the enduring conflict between the restless pressure of circumstance and the quiet sovereignty of a disciplined inner life, asking whether we will be ruled by passing impulses, public clamor, and accident, or will rule ourselves through deliberate thought, calm purpose, and ethical steadiness that confer a higher, freer kind of power than any offered by status or chance; it proposes that real leadership begins within, in the training of attention, emotion, and will, and that such mastery enlarges character, clarifies judgment, strengthens relationships, and sustains useful action, especially when outer conditions are noisy, hurried, or uncertain.

First appearing in the early twentieth century in the United States, the book belongs to the tradition of concise moral essays and practical self-help addressed to the aspiring citizen and worker of a rapidly modernizing society. Jordan, an American author, arranges brief chapters that read like focused addresses on everyday conduct and inner discipline. There is no fictional plot; the arena is the reader's daily life—home, workplace, and civic spaces—and the historical backdrop is the Progressive Era's faith in character formation. Its short chapters, direct diction, and accessible structure position it somewhere between moral meditation, practical handbook, and public-minded exhortation.

It offers a clear premise: power that lasts begins with governing one's thoughts, emotions, and responses before trying to control events or other people. Jordan's voice is earnest, courteous, and insistent, favoring crisp statements, illustrative contrasts, and rhythmic repetition to press a point. The style is compact and vigorous, designed for reading in brief sittings and for re-reading. The tone avoids cynicism, aiming instead at steady encouragement and moral clarity without technical jargon. Readers encounter actionable counsel—practical rules of attention, patience, and purpose—presented in a sequence that builds momentum while remaining spoiler-safe, since the value lies in reflection rather than narrative surprise.

At its core, the book treats self-control as a form of constructive freedom: the ability to choose one's course unhindered by panic, temper, drift, or the contagion of hurried crowds. It explores how attention shapes character, how habits either enslave or empower, and how calmness under pressure preserves judgment and courtesy. It links inward poise with outward usefulness, arguing that reliability, fairness, and considerate speech grow naturally from disciplined thought. Without descending into asceticism, it recommends temperance of mood, economy of time, and clear intention, presenting self-mastery as the practical foundation for integrity, influence, and the humane exercise of responsibility.

For contemporary readers navigating constant stimuli and friction—digital notifications, volatile news cycles, crowded calendars—the book's insistence on deliberate attention and steadiness feels newly relevant. Its counsel

anticipates current research on focus and emotional regulation, yet arrives free of jargon and with an ethical horizon that includes civility and service. Leaders will recognize practical guidance on composure, follow-through, and trustworthiness; students and professionals will find a remedy for distraction and indecision. By connecting self-command to the common good, the work offers more than productivity tips: it sketches a citizenship of character, where personal discipline strengthens families, workplaces, and communities.

The argument is neither harsh repression nor stoic indifference; it is disciplined humanity. Jordan portrays self-control as compatible with warmth, imagination, and compassion, because mastery of impulse protects one's best intentions and keeps action aligned with principle. The book also acknowledges that culture tugs at attention and inflames emotion, so it proposes practices that reduce hurry, clarify purpose, and restore perspective. Some formulations reflect their era, yet the core emphasis on patient, purposeful self-government anticipates later conversations about emotional intelligence and ethical leadership. Its vision embraces firmness without rigidity, ambition without vanity, and serenity without withdrawal from the world.

Approach it as a set of brief meditations to be savored slowly, each chapter inviting a pause for application—to a difficult email, a tense meeting, a family disagreement, or a personal habit. Read with a pencil or a journal, translating insights into small, repeatable practices, and notice how the cumulative effect clarifies intention and steadies conduct.

Allow for the period language, but attend to the living core: a humane, practicable philosophy of inner rule that dignifies daily life. In an age crowded with advice and alarms, this book offers a quietly demanding companion for growing character into dependable action.

Synopsis

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Self-Control, Its Kingship and Majesty by William George Jordan is a non-fiction collection of brief essays from the early twentieth century that advances the primacy of self-mastery in personal conduct and civic life. Jordan, an American essayist, presents self-control as an inner sovereignty: the ordered rule of the will over thought, feeling, and action. He positions it as the underpinning of character and effectiveness, not a dour restraint but a constructive redirection of energy. The opening movement establishes the theme that individuals gain dignity and reliability when they govern themselves, and that this inner government is the surest basis for freedom and responsibility.

Jordan clarifies what he means by self-control, separating it from mere suppression. He describes it as intelligent choice guided by principle, the habit of pausing to examine motives and consequences before acting. The essays argue for steadiness rather than oscillation, proportion rather than exaggeration, and deliberation rather than impulse. He critiques self-excuse and moral drifting, emphasizing accountability for one's mental states as well as outward behavior. Clear standards, he suggests, enable men and women to resist caprice and popular contagion, making judgment calmer and more just, while encouraging a consistent harmony between ideals professed and decisions made.

Turning from definition to cultivation, the book outlines the mechanics of training the will. Jordan stresses that character grows through small, persistent choices that shape habits, not through dramatic resolutions. Attention, concentration, and methodical planning become instruments of mastery, conserving strength for worthy ends. He counsels starting with attainable acts, maintaining continuity, and converting aspiration into daily discipline. The essays argue against waiting for inspiration or fortune, proposing instead a deliberate program of thought-management, orderly work, and honest self-examination. Self-control, in this view, is a practical art that quietly builds reliability, resilience, and fidelity to purpose over time.

A central portion examines inner disturbances that fracture judgment—anger, irritability, worry, and haste. Jordan portrays these states as squanderers of energy that cloud perception, distort fairness, and precipitate regrettable words or deeds. He recommends mental poise as an active strength: the capacity to hold feeling in reserve until reason can guide it, to speak after understanding, and to keep events in proportion. The essays advocate patience and measured response without endorsing passivity, presenting restraint as the enabling condition for effective action. By cooling the reflex of the moment, self-control protects both character and results.

Jordan also treats the social dimension of self-mastery. He connects self-control with courtesy, trustworthiness, and influence, proposing that people lead most persuasively by governing themselves. Composure under provocation, fairness in judgment, and exactness in promises are

presented as practical expressions of inward rule. He warns against gossip, rash criticism, and unconsidered speech, arguing that disciplined words can build confidence and dignity in both private and public life. The essays suggest that self-control deepens empathy and strengthens cooperation, since it tempers egoism and makes room for listening, patience, and a just weighing of others' positions.

In discussing aims and outcomes, the book ties self-control to purpose. Jordan encourages readers to choose clear ideals, to align means with ends, and to measure success by integrity rather than applause. He shows how self-mastery steadies perseverance through reversals and moderates elation in triumph, preventing either from displacing principle. Preparation and constancy, rather than chance, are treated as the dependable path to achievement. The essays propose that inner government protects freedom from mood and fashion, allowing individuals to pursue long work with clean motives and a sustained standard that does not rise or fall with circumstance.

The closing movement gathers these strands into a vision of enduring significance. Jordan portrays self-control as the quiet kingship that gives majesty to everyday life: a disciplined inward order that radiates stability, justice, and constructive power. Without revealing specific chapter culminations, the book ends by reinforcing the claim that personal mastery strengthens families, institutions, and the broader civic fabric. Its case remains resonant in any age of distraction or excess, offering a measured, ethically grounded path to effectiveness. The work's durability lies in

its insistence that lasting influence begins with the steady government of one's own mind and actions.

Historical Context

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William George Jordan (1864-1928) was an American essayist and lecturer whose concise moral tracts reached a wide audience at the turn of the twentieth century. *Self-Control, Its Kingship and Majesty*, published in the United States during the Progressive Era, belongs to a cluster of Jordan's character-building books issued in small, gift-sized editions. Addressed to general readers rather than academics, the work presents brief exhortations on personal discipline and conduct. Its emergence coincided with an expanding national print market of inexpensive books and magazines, which enabled moral and practical counsel to circulate far beyond urban centers to schools, churches, clubs, and ordinary households.

Industrialization reshaped American life in the decades surrounding the book's publication. Factories, railroads, and large corporations reorganized work around schedules, supervision, and productivity targets, while cities absorbed millions seeking opportunity. Office employment grew with typewriters, telephones, and managerial hierarchies, demanding punctuality and emotional restraint from clerks and supervisors. Labor unrest and debates over employer authority versus worker autonomy were common. In this environment, the language of self-control resonated as a portable ethic: a way to navigate the pressures of time discipline, competition, and crowded urban life. Jordan's emphasis on inner mastery mirrored contemporary