No. 198.

Isaac meditating at even-tide.
Genesis xxiv, 63. "And Isaac went out to meditate in the field at even tide."

Important as this incidental circumstance may appear in the story of the patriarch Isaac, it is yet not without its interest even to us. It presents him at least in a favorable and propitious point of view. It furnishes a hint from whence we may gather instruction. It is certainly an agreeable picture which is presented to the mind, when one contemplates the patriarch in the simplicity of the rural life of those early days, or in the cool and refreshing expanse of a eastern climate, going out to meditate, to call in the thoughts which may have been scattered, to give better employment to the faculties which may have been wearied in the duties of servile occupations. We seem to be transported to a kind of golden age when...
men tended their folds & cultivated their ground, ...tended with God, & thought of God, & loved Him, served Him. Imagination presents this, as it were, a bright spot, void of pollution, by none of the demoralizing cares, vices, refinements, of the present, present scenes.

But, my friend, each one of us may form to himself, at least, such a bright spot as this, wherein he may derive from it the best of happier influences. For this purpose let us think of the example of Isaac. Let us learn from it the art of the duty of meditation, let us be advised to retire within ourselves for the purpose of reflecting, to go out of the busy world, and surround ourselves, as far as possible, with alone, with our hearts.

The duty of meditation, then, is the duty pressed upon us by the text. And one would think, that upon a being constituted like man, the practice of this duty would scarcely need to be urged. God has given man, and to man alone of all beings on this earth, the power of meditating; and therefore we neglect it, we do, despite to the distinguishing gift of God. Amen.
as our feet & hands are formed for motion, our eyes for vision, our ears for hearing, so much are our minds formed for meditation. If he who omits to use the power of reflection is as foolish, to say the least, as he who refuses to open his eyes, or to move his limbs. In one way or another we must meditate: the difference among men is with regard to the objects upon which they meditate. It belongs to the very nature of mind to think; only some expend their thoughts on worthless or degrading objects, others on pure & important ones. The man, who lives immersed in the cares & perplexities of the world, who is busy with his enterprises, plans, & schemes, the passions arise sometimes during nights of toil & watching, he most surely meditates, but in what? does he meditate? His periods of thought & reflection are called into intense emotion, but for what? There is no want of meditation, nor is he perhaps to be blamed for meditating in this way—but half this deal of thinking, employed on higher objects, would give him an elevated tone of mind & relieve him from the influence of those thoughts which continually drag him downward to earth. Such
him there... We all continually meditate on one object or another; there is always some point around whose thoughts gather to stick they adhere... This however is not what is meant when we speak distinctively of the duty of meditation; for this duty seems always to suppose some effort to abstract our thoughts from common objects of attention, or gather them on something out of the usual course. We call him a man of meditation, who withdraws from the thing of every day cases, for the express purpose of reflecting on serious or important topics... It seems to take up its organized solitude of calmness are requisite for this habit. And to a certain degree, they are so. The mind must help itself, if it would acquire strength; have for meditation. It must have time and opportunity to select its thoughts or connect them together. There must be a pause in order to enquire where we are or what are we doing. Our powers of faculties, that are continually wandering each in its favorite path; full of busy curiosity, must be summoned in & concentrated on one useful or important point. The objects, of ordinary interest, dissipate attention, must
be shut out, or not suffer to intrude their disturbing presence. By all this, it is not meant, that there should be anything gloomy or unsocial in our habits in order to perform well the duty of meditation. It is not necessary, that we should retire to caves or cloisters, or enter upon the useless attitude of monastic life; but it is necessary that we should have collected, composed, thoughtful hearts, or be sometimes alone.

With regard to the subjects we should employ our thoughts, they will naturally suggest themselves to one, who is disposed to meditate. All subjects are proper for this purpose, as tend to elevate, purify, and are important to us as useful members of society, as rational beings, as subjects of G's government. In the hours of meditation, many of us should think much of G, of his perfections, and glories. This is not a subject for man thoroughly to explore or understand; for probably no one ever stretched his thoughts towards the Infinite Being, without feel...
ing the time of these trembling question: "Who can find out God? Who can find out the All into perfection? It is higher than heaven, deeper than the abyss, what can we do?" Still we may adore this majesty, bend to his sceptre; we may form some ideas of his odour, power, his rectitude, goodness, we may assemble in our minds images of every thing this excellent, lovely. We can add eternity immortality to every perfection; although humanity cannot rise no nearer the greater than this, yet let us ask our hearts, is not this near enough for every mortal purpose?" (Taken from Butler)

Again, the state of our own character of hearts will be a very edifying and important subject for meditation in the hour of retirement. If we have the firmness to investigate our own hearts with impartiality, we can scarcely do any thing better. At the close of each day let us give an honest statement, ask ourselves practical searching questions.
Have I been thankful for the mercies of God? Have I beenjourneyed upon one? Have I avoided dangers and ensnaring company? In the hour of temptation have I thought of God? Have I been upright, kind, faithful, diligent? Has the language of truth dwelt upon my lips? the laws of kindness ruled my heart? Have I laid aside all oath and curse? At the close of the day, am I in a proper temper of mind? Should the bed, on which I now lie down, prove the bed of death, am I prepared to meet my God? Thus let us enquire: thus let us meditate. Thus will God bless our enquiries for our good. (from Butler.)

Another topic for meditation may be the dealings of His providence in times past. We may see the plan of His wisdom, goodness unfolding itself from the age of the patriarchs down to the present times. We may see, how amidst darkness, storms seemed to join the tapestry of divine knowledge, this been kept alive. How came down the course of sacred history...
what a chain of wonders, what a variety of characters, what miracles of mercy, what monuments of justice, what triumphs of divine wisdom are exhibited to our view! To these subjects, join the history of the Nazirite of his religion, of his apostles, of his labours, toils, sufferings, of death of all these holy men. If you will find it a subject of dreams be exhausted, ever these new wonders, ever be themes to your admiring contemplation. (For Butcher.)

Once more, let us meditate on our future prospects both for this world and for the world to come. Please not to think of our prospects in this world either anxiety or carelessness. While we meditate, we must remember that God will care for us if we are fears, but he will do it through the medium of our own enterprises and industry. - The doctrine of Providence lays no foundation for sloth or inattention. We must look before us as far as we can, to leave nothing out of our plans, but anxiety is distrust. - With regard to our prospects in a future world, we can hardly think too much nor too earnestly. The consequences of our
deeds of our habits are to follow us beyond the grave do much, almost every thing. frowned making of our opinion of happiness or misery. It is a solemn thought indeed. If we should not meditate upon it. It thoughtless immortal! There, something menotons in the ground. It careless them! There, destruction in the character. (Rom 5:1)

I have just hinted at these topics for meditation. Our own thoughts will supply what is wanting. Now pass to another subject of meditation. It seems more peculiarly appropriate to the present time. I mean, the works of God in the world of nature around us. These are a most interesting object of contemplation, especially at this season of the year. Isaac went out to meditate in the field. (Gen 26:7) In our fields we may see new peculiarly trace the foot steps of the Aton meditate upon them. All nature at this moment as it were, now being of moving under the hand of God. That new creation, every year comes on after the deep desolation of winter, is now opening an in rich of beautiful profusion. The world around
us smiles under the bounty of the praise of the great Giver... The trees bow their heads as if ingrateful acknowledgment to Him, the bade nature for their roots, so real them on high, & clothe themselves beantious verdure... every thing is overflowing with life's origin. The rapid progress of luxuriant vegetation is going on in the secret strength of nature from the seed with the hand of the diligent hand. Mankind has scattered, a rich harvest is silently ripening. The goodness of God comes down upon the earth in the warm and fertilizing influences of day, as it breathes upon us almost in audible accents in the refreshing breeze of a summer's evening. Whether it be in the powerful rays of a midday sun, as in the showers, as in the clouds, the thirsty ground. Do you see the working of nature? God. His bounty is displayed in the multiplied flocks and herds. He crowns man with every creature, life, to enjoy with on high new the stories here of His existence. To the power of God, that breaks from the mighty thunder cloud, of heaps of flashes in the bolt of lightning.
In short, on every side there is a voice speaking in a kind of sweet tone of the agency of Jehovah. Here then may I say there is a subject for meditation. When you must all feel to be appropriate, impressive. Shall we view the wonders of the beauty of this season with indifference? Shall man be cold and silent, when all nature is testifying of his God? No, rather we shall consider every field to be an altar from which our praises, gratitude may ascend to God, on every plant we will observe with admiring and glad hearts the working of the finger of the All. Of what avail would all your labours be, were it not for these laws of nature? As God has established to bless your labours, shall that every Being be who is at this moment the having for you the ripe grain & rich fruits of autumn be neglected or forgotten? Here, truly, is a subject of meditation. This is open to all, in which may participate. This is true in proportion as our knowledge of nature rises, our wonder & delight will rise too. Still there is abundant matter of useful
contemplation to the most ignorant or the least understanding. "In order to improve the noblest depictions of nature to the great purposes of improvement and adornment, it is by no means necessary to have scientific acquaintance with them. She husbandman, who cannot analyze his land, yet knows it is his. She blesses his labours, and brings forth witnesses; she sows the seed which he sowed in the furrows. Those and of individuals, who knows little of anything of the properties of the plants and flowers which surround them, can nevertheless look with delight on their brilliant colours, enjoy their fragrance, bless the hand which gave them to the world. To feel the beauty of a natural scene, it is not necessary to be able to describe or delineate it. To admire the magnificence of the starry heavens, of the sun in his splendour, of the moon walking in her brightness, it is not necessary to be acquainted with the systems and laws of astronomical science. The beautiful Scene has not looked up his gifts for the contemplation of a few, she
it rememberd I find these gifts a sensible, grateful heart is the best return. Frequent meditation will be one means of acquiring this disposition. it will teach us to feel more gratefully the value of our mercies. we shall discover more of their worth. if we have any generosity of mind, our gratitude, obedience, purity, will keep pace with our contemplation of God in his works. 

And let me here remind you, one of the peculiar advantages of country life furnishes much meditation. There is certainly in this, if one will but improve it; something much more favorable to devout contemplation, than in the bustle of the midst of a city life. It has been strongly said, "God made the country, a man made the town." In the crowded, bustling city, one sees almost nothing but the doings and operations of men in the country, it is the power of God that is working everywhere around you. "Here there is an image of God's greatness impressed upon the entire world face of nature. this should make us all join,
breathe into our hearts a wholesome and purifying fear. The very rocks and hills are scriptures unto man, and teach him the power of God. These things have neither speech nor language; but their voices are heard among men: their sound is gone out into all lands. Their words unto the ends of the world. For there is every thing to teach man his weakness, dependence, how little he can do, of how he doth all things. Not a bird or an animal but has habits of life, independent of man, but has agencies as man never taught, of propensities among could never inspire. The growth of all the plants and fruits of the earth, depend upon hands over all man has no control. Everywhere about us there is a vast system going on utterly independent of human wisdom or human interference. But in great cities in the contrary man seems to be every thing of man alone. There men are the busy, bustling, constant actors all that is curious in art, whatever the human kind has of wit, wisdom, or eloquence, or beauty, or organs, is conceived there.
all the marvels scattered elsewhere glaringly over
the face of the earth are there collected into a sin-
ple point; every fascination is spread out for the
senses. It is difficult not to see, almost im-
possible not to feel, there is scarcely a breathing
time to pause the silent, to remember that there
is a day of judgment, an hour of death. There
you have scarcely time or opportunity to observe
the mighty majestick operations in which God has
alone of man has only to stand by and gaze on with
wonder and adoration. As the body, harassed with
the close noxious air of cities, seeks relief in
the freedom & purity of the fields, so the mind
turns from the crowded mansats of business oppre-
sion. "Where works of man are cluster'd close around,
And works of God are hardly to be found,
To regions, where in spite of sin & war,
"Traces of Eden are still seen below,
"Where mountain, river, forest, field, & grove
"Remind us of our Maker's former love;"
If they only grasp opportunities for observing the
works of God. By finding the greater in the world
of nature around you, are better a mere occurrence,
do not forget. That the duty of meditation is
proportionally stronger a more important. We are
very apt to become insensible to the wonders of
God's works of wisdom, because we live continually
in the midst of them... Let us cautiously guard
against this unhappy effect of familiarity.
first, remember, I entreat you, that habits of me-
itation and reflection are of great value to your char-
acters; they will render your better members of soci-
ety as well as better persons. The thoughtful, un-
reflecting man is like a cloud without water, borne
about in every direction by every wind... But
the man, who has prised himself to the habit
of useful meditation, not only begins his day
with God, but frequently in the course of it breathes
forth his thoughts towards heaven. While he is dif-
gent in business, he is fervent in spirit; shall
converse with his Maker. How dignified, serene
will be the conduct of such a character! The circles
in ... the moves will be blessed by his presence. His relatives with whom he is connected will be proud of his being in his esteem. The church to which he belongs will be filled by his example... To such a character, life will be usefulness; death will be a triumph; eternity will be a glory.” (Dutch). - Let me then entreat you, like the patriarch, to meditate at eventide, to have habitually in your thoughts, especially at this season, that God “watereth the hills from his chambers, who causeth grass to grow for the cattle, and herb for the service of man, of whose riches the world is full, who reneweth the face of the earth.”

At home, June 22, 1823. afternoon.