

- 9 -

The next day was Saturday when each scholar was required to speak a short piece. Mine was the speech of Decius, commencing "Gods! can a Roman Senate long debate which of the two to choose, slavery or death" etc. I had not uttered the first sentence when I was corrected for not making the proper gesticulation, and ordered to repeat it. It is very probable I did not strictly obey the monition, but in an instant this huge man, the D.D. sprang from his elevated seat, where he was superintending the exercises, and with flushed face struck me such a blow with the ferule that I did not soon forget. It was the custom in those days to flog frequently and sometimes, cruelly, but that was the first blow I had ever received from an adult. That day, as usual I rode home with my brother to pass Sunday. I was so enraged and mortified that I could not speak without bursting into tears, and it was not until the next day after Church service in the house, my father proposed a ride, and during that ride, insisted on knowing exactly what had happened. I told him with great reluctance, for altho' only thirteen, and very small for my age, I believed I ought to have resisted and revenged myself without troubling him. The scene in the Chapel and the blow, so connected in my mind I could not separate them, were narrated in the order in which they occurred. In telling the cow-pen scene my father laughed immoderately, the reason for which I did not see at the time, and felt rather hurt, but when I came to tell of the blow, he flashed up and straightened himself in the saddle and looked the indignant father and at the same time the magnificent horseman he was. Just then, we came to a great ditch with a quicksand bottom, and my father's horse showing some disposition to shy, he gave him the lash, and cleared the ditch with a bound; I followed on a slashing thoroughbred colt. My father seemed much pleased with my feat, and beckoning to the party behind to go round by the bridge, said to me, I think I shall send you to West Point, which was the first intimation I had of my future destiny.