

The year 1880, brought Father Soullier a new opportunity for the exercise of his multiform powers. In the month of March of that year the French government issued a decree by which an iniquitous law, that had remained a dead-letter since the memorable "Reign of Terror," was called to life anew. This thrice unjust enactment was, at first, directed mainly against the Jesuits whose expulsion at three months notice it proclaimed. Later on however the same decree was extended to all other religious bodies that were found to be in sympathy with the persecuted sons of St. Ignatius. In this latter category the Oblates of Mary Immaculate were comprised, and consequently they were marked out for banishment as enemies of the Republic. In the first week of November all the Oblates houses in France were violently invaded by the armed representatives of a pulsillanimous power. The never-offending inmates, those untiring missionaries who had so long labored with vice-conquering zeal for the benefit of their fellow-citizens, were driven forth from their prayer-sanctified homes, and forced to seek a refuge in other more hospitable lands. During those days of trial Father Soullier was the able defender of justice, and the undaunted denouncer of cowardice and oppression. Amongst the regular clergy of France he was recognized as a champion, who, with crucifix in hand, strove courageously against the inroads of heartless and irreligious men. When the unholy decree was being carried out in Paris Father Soullier was stopping at the Oblate house, *Rue St. Petersbourg*. On the fifth of November, an armed band of ruffans appeared before the house and demanded admission in the name of the law. On being

refused an entry, those shameless dupes of a vacillating government smashed in the doors with their axes and crowbars, and then led out the Fathers one by one. Father Soullier was the last to leave that quiet home. The following is a translation of his spirited protest against such a barefaced violation of the rights of citizenship. The French text was published in the *Univers* of Paris, November the seventh, 1880.

"Undoubtedly you expect, on my part, an energetic protestation. Yes, I protest against the violent and arbitrary act by which you make this encroachment upon my liberty, and upon my rights as a property-owner and a French citizen.

"You are writing a page of history in which you yourselves play a very sorry part. What an inheritance you are getting ready for your children! I pity them. Will they not have to blush for shame because of the share you are taking in this crying injustice?

"What wrong have we done you? What crime have we committed to justify this display of armed men and this churlish invasion of our home? Ask the inhabitants of our neighborhood. They will all tell you that we help the poor, that we visit the sick, that we exercise a ministry of public utility, that we are the most peace-loving and inoffensive of men, that we are always eagerly ready for every work of charity and devotedness. I take as my witness these gentlemen who are doing me a great honor by being present with their sympathies on this sorrowful occasion. I will be grateful to them as long as life shall last.

"Is our respect for the freedom of all men the reason why you deprive us of our liberty?