

cuted for one hundred and fifty years, which, as an instance of religious imposition, has been declared "to be without a parallel."

The various steps by which this was done were kept secret, as Jesuit methods usually are, but on the fact there is abundant evidence, as the following account will show.

Early in the seventeenth century, about fifty years after the departure of Xavier, Robert de Nobilibus, a nephew of Cardinal Bellarmine and grand-nephew of Pope Marcellus II., and other Jesuit fathers in Madura, perceiving the strong prejudices of the Hindus against Europeans and the Christian religion, devised a plan, as subtle as it was criminal, whereby they hoped to overcome native prejudices by pretending that they were substantially one with the Brahmans themselves, and that Christianity and Brahmanism were essentially one, only that the former, being older and purer than the latter, should be accepted in its place. Studying the native language carefully; attaining a minute acquaintance with the usages and customs of the priesthood; preparing themselves, by a long course of austere training, for the part they were to act, and armed with writings made to resemble certain portions of the Vedas, and declared to be of equal authority, they entered Madura, not as Christian missionaries, but as Brahmans of a superior order, who had come to restore the most ancient form of the native religion. Their success, at first, was not great, but when charged in a large assembly, specially convened, with being an impostor, who sought to deceive the people, in order to introduce a new religion into the country, Malihilus produced his manuscripts, affirmed that the Romaca Brahmans were of much older date than those with whom he was contending, and in the presence of all declared and made oath that he was really descended from the god Brahma. On this, three Brahmans, impressed by his specious evidence and earnestness, advised that they should not persecute a man who declared that he was one of themselves, and gave such evidence of the truth of his assertions. Thus audacity and speciousness gained a certain amount of credence.

To sustain these pretensions spurious documents were produced,* and the fathers adopted names and usages which gave them a close resemblance to Suniassis, men devoted to the most ascetic forms of Hinduism, and greatly revered and feared by the more ignorant and superstitious of the people.

As Father Tachard wrote: "The missionaries have resolved to assume the dress and manner of living of Brahmanical Suniassis. This was a very difficult undertaking, and nothing less than apostolic zeal and love could have enabled them to sustain its hardships and austerities. For, besides

* The most important of these was a work published in Paris in 1778, under the title, "L'Ezour Vedam, ou Ancien Commentaire du Vedam, contenant l'exposition des opinions religieuses et philosophiques des Indiens, Traduit du Sanscrit par un Brauni." An elaborate and scholarly analysis of this remarkable production is given in the fourteenth volume of the "Asiatic Researches" by Francis Ellis, Esq. He declares it to be "an instance of religious imposition without a parallel." The author is unknown.