

1635. undertook to render them odious and contemptible ; and at first they succeeded without much exertion, not only because they had to deal with an extremely superstitious and suspicious nation, but also because many had already got it into their heads that the religion of the French did not suit them, and would even be fatal to them, if it was established in their midst.¹

Other difficulties. The medicine-men, therefore, easily succeeded in throwing suspicion over all the actions of the Fathers, and especially their prayers, which they represented as witchcraft ; so that those religious were obliged to hide, in order to say their breviary and perform their other devotions. Independent of this unfortunate prejudice, it required them to effect an almost complete reform in the ideas of a people jealous of its reputation for being better thinkers than others ; to impose severe laws and strict obligations on men whose ideal of glory and happiness was to be hampered in nothing. If we call to mind all the obstacles that heart-rooted libertinage, so hard to conquer when it has known no check, raised to the holy maxims of Christianity in the savages, who knew no rules but those of a perverted reason, and a nature accustomed to obey every inclination, —then we can understand the position of the three strangers, to whom men such as I have depicted, already began to ascribe all their misfortunes.²

It is true that the Hurons were then in a very sad position ; for this nation, so flourishing of old, and which had, time out of mind, been regarded as the mistress of the others, now not only scarcely ventured to take the field against the Iroquois, but was also a prey to diseases, which finally depopulated their land. With well-constituted minds, capable of rising above prejudice, nothing would have been more easy than to profit by these ac-

¹ Relation de la N. F., 1765, p. 35.

² Relation de la Nouvelle France (1636), p. 83. Father Bressani, in his Breve Relatione, devotes his sec-

ond part to the difficulties which beset the missionaries (pp. 29-71).

Compare le Clercq, i, p. 279 ; Hennepin, *Les Mœurs des Sauvages*, p. 100.