

to minds darkened with prejudice against the religious orders of the Catholic Church, the noble bearing of the good Franciscan honorably commends itself.

Writing in an age when every tongue wagged against the invented abuses of the old Faith, which the Queen, her Parliament and her subjects had repudiated, and by law exterminated; when to denounce and calumniate her priests, her religious orders and institutions, was to increase his influence and popularity, it is singular and remarkable that, without any exception, Shakespeare has taken particular care to clothe his ecclesiastical personages in garments of respectability. If he could not always, with historical accuracy, secure for them admiration and reverence, he, at least, did what he could to shelter them from the storm of ridicule and contempt then enveloping his country.