

*Beyond the Law*, by Miriam Alexander, gets a certain gratuitous amount of advertising from the fact that it was the winning novel in a prize contest in England.

Without meaning to be unkind one cannot prevent the thought arising while reading it, just how bad the competing manuscripts must have been. The scene is Ireland for the most part in the time of William of Orange; the theme is a life-long feud between Dermot Lisronan and a brutal Dutchman, Van der Wynykt, a favourite of the King, who awarded him the confiscated Lisronan estates. One brings away from the volume a confused impression of young women seized and flung headlong down stone stair-

ways, venerable priests hurtling through the air from castle windows, men bound and left to drown inch by inch in flooded cellars, human heads produced suddenly and spectacularly in the midst of banquets,—in short, a mad orgy of crime and cruelty and blood, with the brutal Dutchman directly responsible for it all. Dermot, who from the opening chapter has sworn to avenge his mother's murder, is, throughout the book, living and working for this one object; yet this does not prevent him from marrying the murderer's reputed daughter, whom he does not love and who proves false to him; while, if the reader should guess for a year, he would fail to foresee the special sort of anti-climax with which the book ends: Dermot fails to kill his enemy, the Dutchman, despite his life-long planning, for the simple reason that when they come face to face the latter dies of fright. And we turn the final page just in time to save ourselves from seeing this ineffectual hero cut to pieces by the Dutchman's followers.