

STORIES of New Jersey

ings of the famous "Chinese Salon" and Persian chamber. His lifetime hobby of breeding canaries had doubtless inspired the brilliant tropical bird paper that covered the spacious entrance hall. Downstairs, adjoining the Chinese salon, were two other richly-furnished drawing rooms, and upstairs were bedchambers known by such magnificent-sounding names as "The Green Moreen" and "The Red Silk."

Gouverneur Kemble did not make his home here; the house was in charge of a caretaker who opened it whenever the young master wished to use it as a clubhouse for his friends. They ran over the grounds hilariously playing leap frog on the lawn, or, as Irving recalled, pelting Paulding in the top of the cherry tree. Indoors they would gaily lead the caretaker's daughter to the piano for a round of songs, "to the accompaniment of broiled oysters," Peter Irving put it. Dining was sometimes the prelude to a long relaxation from the day's pleasure, but occasionally, it led to other high-jinks, like the costumed procession in the Chinese Salon, which Peter Irving wrote of years after the merry company had dispersed.

"The Lads of Kilkenny" had their serious moments however, when they heatedly discussed society, the theater, literature and politics. They distrusted the growing power of the common people and sniffed at what they deemed vulgar demonstrations of patriotism. When cannons were being fired on the Fourth of July, one of them remarked sarcastically, "Good God, what a nation we are!"

Since most of "The Lads" were at least amateur writers, it was inevitable that they would turn to writing down their witty observations and decided political views. The piano was stilled and the fish pond lay undisturbed once they began to work. Irving seems to have preferred the lovely summer house by the river to write the short articles which he contributed to the little publication that came to be known as *SALMAGUNDI*. But only his preliminary writing was done in seclusion; the group would gather together to argue about what they had written and to reframe each other's paragraphs and sentences, so that much of *SALMAGUNDI* is a cooperative work.

When they had decided on the material for the first issue they rushed off to a printer in New York, whom they called "dusky Dave," after a popular song of the day. Warning him that he would probably make no money on the little paper, they urged him to hurry it through the press, while they set about preparing the next number.

SALMAGUNDI first appeared on January 24, 1807, and, to the surprise of its authors, became an instant success with the astonishing sale of 800 copies its first day. Its impudence captivated New York and other cities along the Atlantic seaboard. Careful to remain anonymous, "The Lads of Kilkenny" enjoyed themselves hugely satirizing the artificial manners of society, poking fun at poor performances in the theater and ridiculing Jefferson's scientific experiments at Monticello. The device they used to present their comments was a series of letters from the imposing Mustapha Rub-a-Dub Keli Kahn to the equally impressive Asem Hacchem, Principal Slave-Driver to His Royal Highness, the Bashaw of Tripoli. They had selected Tripoli because the recent war with the pirates there had created much interest in that country.

Not all of Irving's writings of this period were devoted to satirizing American culture. On an excursion to Paterson in 1806, he was so struck with