

Keeping Up With the Jameses

THE GREAT MISSOURI RAID

(Paramount)

WHEN *The Great Missouri Raid* opens Jesse James (Macdonald Carey) and his brother Frank (Wendell Carey) are members of a Confederate bushwhacker (guerrilla) party in Missouri during the Civil War. The first significant action shots are the most shocking in the film. With a rope round his neck, Doctor Samuels (Edgar Buchanan) is being threatened with hanging by a party of Union soldiers if he doesn't reveal Jesse's whereabouts; Mrs. Samuels (Anne Revere) appears with a gun; Jesse is found and lashed with a rope-end—we are shown (in Technicolor) his bloody back. When Frank arrives with the bushwhackers there is a battle in which Jesse shoots a bluecoat. The dead man's brother, Major Trowbridge (Ward Bond) is the officer who must give the bushwhackers their parole when the war ends, and not relishing this he has little trouble in arranging an ambush when they ride in to surrender. The James brothers and their associates become outlaws because they aren't given a chance to be anything better, and at home old Doc Samuels and his wife have one long wait for the worst, which frequently happens.

I don't know how much of *The Great Missouri Raid* is fact, or whether there's general agreement about the facts of the James story. In any case, the film shows what can (and sometimes does) follow a failure to forgive or a denial of legal rights to those we don't like. (It also shows the likely end of a life outside the law.) I seem to remember that someone made out a somewhat similar case for the Kellys in Australia, in *Stead's Review* a good many years ago.

The Great Missouri Raid (directed by Gordon Douglas) isn't an outstanding film, though some scenes from it have stayed in my mind. But I found in it, and liked, a certain biographical, documentary quality. This builds up



ANNE REVERE, EDGAR BUCHANAN
"One long wait for the worst"

BAROMETER

FAIR: "The Great Missouri Raid."
OVERCAST: "Soldiers Three."

from the start, with its series of portraits of the bitter, weather-beaten principals, and there is no disguising the fact that the worst will happen before the lights go up. The plot runs on in a quite uncomplicated way from incident to incident, leading to the big railway hold-up. This same documentary quality also, of course, makes the film rather more grim, the scenes of violence more real and terrible, than they might otherwise seem.

SOLDIERS THREE

(M.G.M.)

H. E. BATES once said that Kipling had never given him a moment's pleasure. I don't share this extreme view, though I'm no Kipling fan, have read little of him, and if *Soldiers Three*, "suggested" by his stories, is anything like typical of his flavour, feel I haven't missed much. Still, I wouldn't be surprised to find him come out of it the better in any comparison with the film. He might be funny. I found the film for the most part pretty dull, and I'm sure this wasn't due only to allergy; but perhaps I should add that my 10-year-old graded it "good."

The hero of the story is Ackroyd, though I couldn't get it out of my head that it was Stewart Granger. After a generous measure of preliminary nonsense—fighting, boozing, and, of course, discovering a real Hollywood glamour girl in an Indian village—Ackroyd deserts to rejoin his mates, who have been sent off in a garrison party of fifty to what seems a certain death. They are already surrounded, but in great spirit, when he makes contact. Throwing the villain down a well with a quite exasperating lack of haste, he leaves the dynamite which is to blow his mates sky-high till the fuse is only a few inches long, and then can't decide, for the life of him, which way to toss it. Meanwhile the Colonel has also disobeyed orders and marched to the relief of the garrison, though I suspect that with Ackroyd and Co. there his forces weren't called on for more than a bit of mopping up.

It turns out that a certain amount of disobedience was reckoned on by the shrewd psychologist who'd been giving the orders, so no one is shot or court-martialled. Indeed, some honours are bestowed—verbally, at any rate. "Ackroyd is England," the Colonel says. Poor old England—she's had some terrible things said about her at one time and another.



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