What it boils down to is that the game can only successfully be played by trial and error, frustrating though it may be.

A noteworthy tip in case you foolishly set foot in the labyrinth of underground mazes is to leave behind some of the least valuable clobber you are carrying. By leaving a marker behind you'll save a lot of time aimlessly walking through corridors and tunnels which look exactly alike.

If you leave a pointer, say some food (which always attracts the malicious dwarfs), or your water bottle or a couple of coins (providing your lamp isn't going dim in which case you will need them to put in the vending machine for new batteries), you can quickly establish a map of the maze and get yourself out safely.

Console yourself with the knowledge that the computer is not always as tight-lipped as you may at first think. For instance it gives away some clues, subtle as they are, but your knowledge of classic fairy tales comes in handy.

To find any piece of treasure you have to follow each step in the correct sequence. You'll be hitting your head against a wall if you get to a stage when you know you should be able to use the tantalizingly near object to obtain some treasure but you are lacking a vital item. An obvious example is the bird chirping happily in the sky. You know you need it for something but forgot to pick up the cage to catch the flighty creature in at the previous step.

Before, during and after you experience a close encounter of the kind you would rather not have, with trolls, dwarfs, wizards and elves, you are bound to have the opportunity of picking up a variety of objects. Some of these are worth having, the lamp, money and weapons are good bets for a kick off, but some are just put there to lead you astray. It's up to you to decide which you are going to need.

And unfortunately it's only your good judgement and luck which will reveal the three or four magic words which are vital for finding the treasure. Often you just stumble against them, and sometimes you're given a clue in the form of a riddle which you have to puzzle out.

There are going to be times when you will want to beat up the computer; yet the only way to vent your anger and frustration is to swear at the machine. It only makes you feel even worse. It will either answer you back with whatever exploitive you used, or it will chastise you with: "tut, tut. Mind your language, please".

At the end of the game, either when you have found all the booty or been killed or committed suicide (yes, even that's possible if you can't take the strain), the print out will give you an assessment of how well you fared, along with your points score.

It's just as well there are no hard and fast rules to stick to. If there were it would be far too easy and the fun would be taken out of it.

And once you have been whisked away by a crowd of laughing elves into the sunset having found all the treasure there is little left to hold your attention.
BY KEITH CAMBELL

ADVENTURE is arguably the most popular game so far adopted by the computing fraternity. It tempts the data processing professional to give up his lunch hour to search for hidden treasure in the mainframe and is also finding its way onto many a home and even business microcomputer.

It is a game which generates fervent enthusiasts. I was staying overnight at Brighton on a business trip and, to pass the evening, walked along the seafront, finding myself eventually in a little back street pub. Armed with a pint, I found the only spare seat next to a young man and started a conversation, during which it emerged that I wrote for a computer magazine.

"I know nothing about computers", said my companion, a microbiologist, "but I suppose you have one of those Pet things". Whereupon, a fellow sitting on a nearby bar stool interrupted. "Are you in computing? I am half of a software firm writing commercial software for Pets."

"I'm a Tandy man myself," I told him, feeling that was almost like a declaration of war. A lengthy discussion followed on the relative difficulties of programming the Z 80 against the 6502. Neil, our biologist, yawned and sipped his tequila. Until the conversation turned inevitably to Adventure:

"Isn't that a computer version of Dungeons and Dragons?" he asked, suddenly awake again. From that moment, the only lull in the conversation before closing time was when a round was bought. Three enthusiasts could not be stopped.

Adventure did originate from Dungeons and Dragons. It has appeared on many mainframe computers around the world. The original was written in Fortran and required 64K storage plus disc back-up. In this age of the micro, a fairly complex Adventu-