

GATES OF MORDOR™

#8105

A READY-TO-RUN FANTASY ROLE PLAYING ADVENTURE MODULE FROM
J.R.R. TOLKIEN'S MIDDLE-EARTH®



Compatible with



Rolemaster™



Three low-to-mid level adventures based on THE LORD OF THE RINGS™ and THE HOBBIT™. Each adventure stands on its own and can be set up in minutes. Produced and distributed by IRON CROWN ENTERPRISES, INC.

GATES OF MORDOR

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VA, and Howard Huggins.

Stock # 8105 ISBN 0-915795-81-7

First U.S. Edition: May, 1987

1.0 GUIDELINES

The *Middle-earth Ready-to-Run* Series is designed for Gamemasters who want adventures which can be set up in a few minutes and played in a few hours. The adventures require little or no preparation.

Gates of Mordor has four parts. Section 1.0 deals with guidelines regarding the use of the module. Section 2.0 provides pregenerated characters for the players (which can be used as non player characters if so desired).

The third part contains Sections 3.0, 4.0, and 5.0, the adventures. Each adventure stands on its own, although a common theme unites the stories. They can be set anywhere in Middle-earth where the story seems appropriate.

The fourth part of the module (Section 7.0) contains the encounter charts, and is located at the back of the book, permitting easy reference.

1.1 HANDLING PLAY

Each adventure is geared for a different difficulty level. The one found in Section 3.0 is challenging for 1st or 2nd level characters, or inexperienced players. Section 4.0's adventure is aimed at 2nd or 3rd level adventurers, while the adventure in Section 5.0 is designed for 4th or 5th level characters.

The adventures are divided into five standard parts: (1) the tale, which describes the setting and covers the background and plot; (2) the NPCs, a person-by-person description of the prominent non player characters, including their stats; (3) the layout, a level-by-level, room-by-room description of the adventure site, complete with numbered diagrams, floorplans, and illustrations; (4) the task, a discussion of how to start the adventure, along with the aids, clues, obstacles, and rewards awaiting the adventurers; and (5) encounters, which cover typical or probable meetings between the adventurers and the NPCs.

The GM should skim each section of an adventure before beginning play. Then he can have the players pick pre-designed characters from those provided in Section 2.0, or he can permit the players to design their own PCs. (Of course, the GM can assign PCs.)

Once play ensues, the GM should refer to the Encounter Chart in Section 7.1, at the back of the module. It covers the probability of encounters for every spot in each adventure.

1.2 ADAPTING THE MODULE TO YOUR GAME

Like the rest of the series, this module is designed for use with the *Middle-earth Role Playing* game (*MERP*) or the more advanced *Rolemaster* (*RM*) system, but is adaptable to most other major FRP games. Statistics are expressed on a closed or open-ended scale, using a 1-100 base and percentile dice (D100). No other dice are required.

1.21 CONVERSION CHART

If you play something other than *MERP* or *Rolemaster* and you do not use a percentile system, use the following chart to convert 1-100 numbers to figures suited to your game.

1-100 Stat	D100 Bonus	D20 Bonus	3-18 Stat	2-12 Stat
102+	+35	+7	20+	17+
101	+30	+6	19	15-16
100	+25	+5	18	13-14
98-99	+20	+4	17	12
95-97	+15	+3	16	—
90-94	+10	+2	15	11
85-89	+5	+1	14	10
75-84	+5	+1	13	9
60-74	0	0	12	8
40-59	0	0	10-11	7
25-39	0	0	9	6
15-24	-5	-1	8	5
10-14	-5	-1	7	4
5-9	-10	-2	6	3
3-4	-15	-3	5	—
2	-20	-4	4	2
1	-25	-4	4	2'

1.22 CONVERTING HITS AND BONUSES

Bonuses: When converting percentile values to a 1-20 system a simple rule is: for every +5 on a D100 scale you get a +1 on a D20.

Hits: The concussion hit numbers found in this module only represent general pain and system shock. They cover bruises and small cuts rather than wounds. Critical strike damage is used to describe serious wounds and fatal blows. The hit figures shown here are less important than those used in game systems where death occurs as a result of exceeding one's available hits. Should you use a game system that employs no specific critical strike results (e.g., *TSR Incls Dungeons and Dragons™*), simply double the number of hits your characters take or halve the hit values found in this module.

2.0 PLAYER CHARACTERS

The following chart provides a sampling of pregenerated player characters of varying profession and levels. Statistics are given for both *MERP* and *Rolemaster*. The GM may wish to assign his players a character or allow them to select from the list. Of course, the GM can utilize the unused PCs as non player characters. After all, the players may design their own characters or employ characters already in use.

The GM should remember, however, that regardless of how the players acquire their characters, each adventure is geared for a different difficulty level (see 1.1). We suggest PCs tough enough to meet the challenge.

KEY

Codes: See the NPC stats on page 5 for an explanation of the basic codes. The following is a list of other codes and abbreviations which might be ambiguous.

Power Points: The number (if any) given in parentheses indicates the possession of a "bonus spell item" and its bonus (see *MERP* Section 4.56).

Skill Bonuses: NA, SL, RL, CH = Maneuver and Movement in No Armor, Soft Leather, Rigid Leather, and Chain; IHE, IHC, 2H, THR, MSL, PA = Offensive Bonuses for I-H Edged, I-H Concussion, 2-Handed, Thrown, Missile, and Pole-arms; S/H = Stalk/Hide; Lock = Pick Lock; Trap = Disarm Trap; Rune = Read Runes; Item = Use Items; Dir = Directed Spells; Perc = Perception; S SK = Secondary Skills; Lang = Language; List = Spell List.

Secondary Skills: Each secondary skill is abbreviated by giving the beginning letter, of the skill (see *MERP* Section 2.33). The bonus for that skill is given following the abbreviation.

Languages: Languages are abbreviated by using their first three letters (see *MERP*, ST-I, p. 19); exception: BS = Black Speech and Bet = Silban (Bethetur). The rank for each language is given following the abbreviation.

Spell Lists: Spell lists are abbreviated by using the first few letters in each word of the spell list name; for example, "Snd/Lt Ways" refers to the "Sound/Light Ways" spell list.



3.0 ORCS OF THE GREEN CLAW

Between Sauron's ancient realm of Mordor and the great empire of Gondor, home of the Faithful from Numenor, lies fair Ithilien. This strip of woodland and gardenlands stretches like a noble's trencher spread with Nature's bounty between the ribbon of blue Anduin and the jagged spires of the Ephel Duath.

Ithilien is divided by the Ithilduin, a swift cold river rising on Mordor's boundary and rushing down past Minas Ithil to Osgiliath. Until recently Osgiliath was capital of an empire encompassing lands from the shores of Anfalas to the Mountains of Rhiin, a thousand miles across. North Ithilien, an area once known as the "garden of Gondor", now stands peaceful and largely untroubled by the hand of Man. Gondor's settlements are limited to the city of Minas Ithil, to farmsteads in the Eryn Amen, and fishing and craft villages along the banks of Anduin. North Ithilien's majestic forests, green glades and heathered uplands are abandoned since the Plague swept through the countryside, devastating every village, hamlet, farm and cottage. The survivors, ever looking over their shoulders at the Mountains of Shadow, mostly fled to more secure holds.

Here, in the wide, rambling woodlands of North Ithilien, those few hardy folk who love this land more than their safety, are soon to suffer another evil plague unless the brave adventurers can save them. But this plague comes not from the bites of tiny insects: it walks on two legs — and on four. A dark mind is at work, behind The Orcs of the Green Claw.

3.1 TRAIL OF THE WINE BANDITS

In the northern reaches of the *Ephel Duath* (S. "Mountains of Shadow") a stream is born from the snow on the high slopes. Its waters are cold, and impelled by their height rush down over cataracts and through a steep-sided valley to the foothills of Ithilien. This is *Sir Ascarwing* (S. "Rushing-Spray River"). It flows down through North Ithilien gathering tributaries and winding through the woods and forests. The stepped and shelving landscape produces numerous waterfalls and rapids. At one point the river disappears altogether through a cleft in its rocky bed to reemerge in a torrential spout from an underground cave and channel. This famous beauty-spot, where a walkway runs behind the falling sheet of water, known as *Mirainlin Araneth* (S. "Beautiful Jewels of Sunset") or *Henneth Annfin* (S. "Window on the West"), attracted many visitors at one time. At the end of the day, when the sun sinks behind the Ered Nimrais in the west, its red-golden light shines through the clear shoots of water forming an iridescent spectacle — a wonder of glistening, sparkling, scattered light.

Further upstream from this abandoned miracle of nature, on the lower slopes of the *Tyrn Thurion* (S. "Cypress Hills"), lies the Winehouse, more formally known as Mar Maliarnin. Its estates cover south and west facing hill sides, where vines and fruit trees grow in profusion under the tender care of Hir Maliarnin. Hir is Master of the estate and a well known vintner from a long line of vintners. His family and their servants live in a splendid villa below their vineyards, overlooking the vale of a small stream, *Nan Zurenen* (S. "Vale of the Berrywater"). Here they make wines and ales of great variety and superb quality.

Elsewhere in Gondor there are many taverns, inns and wineshops who stock the Winehouse's produce. There are bottles of classic 1586 Culaisson, bulbous stone amphorae brimming with Mircalen liquor, stout barrels of Sage Ale, casks of thick and heady GinnCs, stoppered glass flagons redly shining with fiery Culunor. Most widely available are the red and white wines simply known as Maliarnin.

FIRICHAL



The red is rich and full-bodied, a favorite of nobles and commanders in many areas, and in good years commanding a very high price. The white is soft and light with a tang of wild scents, well loved by gentlewomen and served at many a marriage feast.

But Firichal, owner of a drinking house and a wine merchant, is worried. His bi-annual supplies from Mar Maliarnin have not arrived and are now several weeks overdue. Perhaps the rumor of bandits and other evildoers lurking in the shelter of North Ithilien's woods are more substantial than many think? Or perhaps something more serious is wrong in Nan Ascarwing? Firichal's concern over his supplies and the supplier is the player characters' introduction to this adventure. The merchant will offer them a good reward for finding out what has happened to Hir Maliarnin and his wine and ale.

The player characters are also likely to have heard the rumors of bandits in the Taur Ithilien. Some two centuries past, after the struggle and civil war known as the Kin-strife, the returning king Eldacar invited many Northmen to settle in Ithilien, men from his mother's people. Those that came became woodsmen, farmers and fishermen and most grew to love the rolling forestland. However, others grew unhappy with the supercilious nature of the Dunedain and revolted against the stricter rules of the Gondorian Empire, taking to a life of crime and banditry. After the Plague decimated and depopulated the region it was practically abandoned to them. Only occasional forays by patrols of guardsmen from Minas Ithil keep the problem under control. Since the Watch on Mordor was discontinued, who knows what horrors might come creeping from the Black Gate or over the Mountains of Shadow?

What has actually happened is that a group of bandits have taken up residence in caves in the *Gonderyth Duath* (S. "Cliffs of Shadow"). The cliffs rise like a huge tree-topped eyebrow, formed on the fault-line of a broad hogsbacked hill, Dol Henfin. They face north and west and the grey scar is clearly visible from the Nan Ascarwing for many miles. From their high position they can look down on the North Road which passes between Minas Ithil and Morannon, and on to Dor RhQnen. The bandits are led by Caerlinc, who was at one time a simple farmer. He is far from simple however, and having detected signs of Orcs in the area — something unthinkable just five years ago — has trained his band to mimic Orcs and orkish behavior during their attacks.

The Orcs Caerlinc has seen (and avoided) are Orcs of the Green Claw, also called *Scara-hai* in their own tongue. They are responsible for the delay in the delivery of wine to Firichal and in fact have put an end to hundreds of years of winemaking at Mar Maliarnin. Three *bukras* (Or. "claws") of Scara-hai came in the night to the villa some weeks ago and slaughtered the whole household in their beds. Those that managed to flee were brought down in their nightshirts, hunted through the darkened trees and torn to pieces. None survived to tell the tale — not all were killed immediately, but those taken prisoner have no hope of remission. The Orcs have also attacked a number of other homesteads and forest cottages in isolated places; the only habitation able to stand up to them being the tiny Elven village of Firimas. However, the village is now besieged by the Scara-hai and none of the Elves have yet dared to try an escape.

The Orcs have been commanded to return to Mar Maliarnin and search for a treasure whose existence was revealed by a woman after subjection to odious and indescribable tortures by the Sara-hai chieftain. The two *bukras* sent back to the villa have been told to search "under the water", this being the only clue to the treasure's location gained before the woman mercifully died. However, with two complex bath-houses, a pool shrine, a well and a dammed lake to investigate, the two commanding Shircks are finding the task a difficult and time-consuming one.

3.2 THE NPCS

The people of North Ithilien are a mixture of Dunadan, lesser Dunadan, Northman and rural Men. Most settlements are close by Anduin, for here there are fertile pasturelands and many good spots for fishing. Further east from the great river the land rises and is afforested. Here dwell sturdy woodsmen and their families, some no doubt descended from Beornings and Woodsmen of Mirkwood and Rhovanion. There are also lawless men (and women) who prey on unwary travelers and other helpless folk.

In this section the four bandits of Caerlinc's band are detailed as well as some of the Scara-hai and the leaders of the two *bukras* at Mar Maliarnin.

3.2.1 CAERLINC

Caerlinc is a middle-aged man with a square face and prominent nose. He has black hair and thick eyebrows and stands a good 6'3" tall, a lesser Dunadan with a grudge against the society that kept him in his place as a farmer despite his four years of proven ability in the Royal Army. Caerlinc would often supplement his family's meals with game hunted in the Taur Ithilien. Then the Great Plague came and all his family died, except for his youngest daughter Calamere. Faced with a future alone, something in Caerlinc's spirit rebelled; something cried out against the injustice of his life. At the age of 40, he became a bandit, first joining a large band and then, more recently, breaking away and forming his own. Caerlinc is slightly honorable in his approach to banditry, and will not kill anyone who surrenders

Caerlinc is also careful about his band's activities. To try and put off any possible search for them, he takes pains to disguise the remains of any attack to look as if Orcs were responsible. He carries a number of orkish knives and other items that they recovered from a raid and drops them at strategic points. They also use arrows and bolts made by Curistel in imitation of orkish ones. To determine that the site of an ambush is **not** an orkish attack, player characters must make an Extremely Hard (-10) Tracking Roll.

Caerlinc is not a ruthless or sly man; he is simply careful. He intends to survive and live his own life now and will always try to deal with a stronger opponent rather than fight him. However, he fights well and has a shield of enchanted boxwood (+10) carved with runes.

Notable Skills: Perception 45, Track 39, Stalk/Hide 35, Hunting 30, Disarm Traps 15. **Languages:** Westron (5), Sindarin (3), Adunaic (2).

CAERLINC



3.2.2 BARDIR

Bardir is a young man originally from the eaves of Mirkwood. His parents followed earlier migrations of their clan southward in search of better lands and weather. Bardir was their only son and came to them late in life; the age gap between them was too big for Bardir to bridge and he soon became bored with their rustic and industrious life. He also resented their servile attitude towards the Dunedain and the way they chastised and remonstrated with him.

Eventually he left their forester's cottage in Taur Ithilien and started wandering, seeking a living in Osgiliath and then further afield, roaming much of "old" Gondor. He became a petty thief in the towns and learned to live rough in the countryside. Bardir has few friends and fewer loves in life: his one great passion is his sword. This he stole from a Wnadan nobleman having been attracted by its intricate design. He calls it *Taihsuairus* (Rh: Right-hand Sword); it has a gold hilt and guard studded with minute pearls and there is a tracery of

gold inlaid on the upper half of the blade. Bardir habitually carries it unsheathed and on display and spends much time each day cleaning and caring for it. It is an eket, equivalent to a shortsword, worth 80gp. Bardir is convinced the blade is magical, but it confers no bonus.

Notable Skills: *Stalk/Hide 56, Track 43, Climb 33, Perception 29, Pick Locks 26, Trickery 25, Foraging 25, Swim 23. Languages: Westron (S), Nahaiduk (3), Sindarin (3), Adunaic (2), Dunael (1).*

3.23 MOFF

Moff is little more than a lad and the greenest of the band. However, he has special talents that are apparent to Caerlinc and he is accepted as a full member by all of them. Moff comes from Anorien, his parents hailing from a small village beside the Anduin. Being poor folk, they had little to offer him and since the age of sixteen Moff had been a laborer. He went around with lads his own age, chased girls and drank. It was in a drunken state when he got into a brawl — a not infrequent occurrence — and a guardsman died having his skull staved in with a stool. Moff was arrested in the sergeant's haste to find a culprit. Finding his friends had deserted him, he decided to get himself out of this problem. He overpowered his guard, stole his gear (chainmail and broadsword) and rifled the money box (he still has 22gp left), then calmly unhitched a horse and rode off. Only when he got to the bridge across Anduin at Osgiliath did he stop shaking inside.

Deciding that refuge in Ithilien might not be a bad idea, he crossed the great river and went to Minas Ithil, disguising himself as a wounded soldier discharged from the Army. He could not sustain the pose for long and hearing of the bandits in Taur Ithilien, sought them out.

Notable Skills: *Stalk/Hide 24, Swim 22, Perception 21. Languages: Westron (S), Sindarin (2).*

MOFF



3.24 CURISTEL

CuristC1 is a true Dunadan, tall and stern-featured, with a glaring visage that makes people wary of him rather than protected. His black hair is kept cropped as short as possible and he wears severely cut, dark clothes. He has a strange background. His father was a leader of the Taur division of the Army in South Ithilien, and trained his son in both magical and martial skills. However, he argued frequently with his father and grew to resent all authority. When his father died as one of the first victims of the Plague, he became even more self-centered and aloof from his colleagues. Since he did not get on with his subsequent commanders, he was never promoted and his dislike of authority grew even more.

Two years ago he deserted after a disagreement over the treatment of some prisoners. From them he had learned of the existence of brigands in Northern Ithilien and he determined to start on a career as a bounty hunter, using his skills to bring these outlaws to justice. He rode north and discreetly followed a number of merchants and travelers taking paths where ambushes had been laid previously, eventually being rewarded with the sight of “wild” men leaping from the trees to attack. Rather than going to the victim's aid, Curistel waited and followed the bandits back to their lair — whereupon he was captured by Caerlinc and Bardir. They persuaded him of the joys of banditry and he realized it would indeed be a more satisfying life. CuristC1's main pride is his great yew bow. He presided over every stage of its manufacture and it is perfectly designed for him (+5 for CuristC1, -5 for anyone else). He also makes arrows using the black feathers of crows, like those made by Orcs. His special Camouflage skill is added to his Hide bonus when he has at least 2 minutes to conceal himself (or others) and is in natural surroundings (e.g. forest, garden, long grass).

Notable Skills: *Camouflage 55, Perception 46, Fletching 45, Ride 34, Swim 34, Stalk/Hide 26, Track 24, Disarm Traps 20, Use Items 20. Languages: Westron (5), Sindarin (5), Adunaic (4), Quenya (3), Waildyth (2). Spell Lists: Surface Ways, Moving Ways.*

3.25 GABALLOL & RHUKSKA

Gaballol and Rhukskä are both *Shirfiks* (Or. “Leaper”), commanders of the basic Scara-hai fighting unit known as a *bukra* (Or. “claw”). As a claw has five talons, so the bukra has five Orcs: two warriors, two scouts and a Shiruk who is responsible for getting the other four to follow orders and complete the task handed down by the tribal superiors. The Shiruks have an ability and use special weapons. The latter are clawed maces which also serve as a token of rank among the Scara-hai. This weapon, called an or-bukar, is typically made of bronze with sharpened steel spikes and may be used as a one-handed weapon (like a morning star) or two-handed:

One-handed: Fumble 6, Criticals CR / PU(A), +5 OB
Two-handed: Fumble 6, Criticals CR / PU, +5 OB
(no/leather armor)

The special ability gives the Shiruks their name. They can perform special feats of leaping, a combination of the diving and tumbling skills. The or-bukar is sometimes used as a prop to assist these maneuvers which can be performed during combat to surprise an opponent. Using his leaping skill, a Shiruk can jump up to 15' (or 6' high) without assistance. The or-bukar can be used as a pole to vault even higher. A Shiruk can forego an attack to perform a Hard MM; if successful he has gotten behind his opponent (setting up an Ambush) and with a result of 100+ also gains surprise. The or-bukar can also be used overhead, for example leaping up and using it to swing on branches. The Shiruk could then (with surprise) launch a kick at an opponent! The leaping MM bonus is shown thus on the NPC Chart: &20e.

Notable Skills: *Climb 30, Ambush 25, Stalk/Hide 10. Languages: Orkish/Scarabit (S), Westron (3), Morbeth (2).*

GABALLOL



3.26 A TYPICAL BUKRA

As mentioned above, the Scara-hai fighting unit or bukra has a leader and four others: two warriors and two scouts. The warriors are accoutered with reinforced leather armor, studded with bronze and iron rivets and small plates, and wield wicked war hammers. These hammers have a peen shaped like a wolf's head opposite the beak of the hammer (its business end). They carry a side arm, either a club or a shortsword — as they often hurl the hammer at an opponent as they close — and an iron-banded wooden shield painted with the symbol of the Green Claw. For ease of movement, the scouts wear ordinary (soft) leather armor, and use ball-headed iron maces and shortbows. Each carries a quiver with 18 black-feathered arrows. All members of the bukra (including the ShirOk) wear a wolfskin cloak thrown over their back outside their armor, and also a hardened leather helmet with a wolf's fur band and tail hanging behind.

WARRIORS — *Notable Skills: Occupational Skill 25, Ambush 10/15, Climb 10, Swim 10. Languages: Orkish/Scarabit (4), Westron (3).*

SCOUTS — *Notable Skills: Climb 15/20, Ambush 10/15, Stalk/Hide 5/15, Perception 5/15, Swim 10, Traps 5/10. Languages: Orkish/Scarabit (4), Westron (3), Morbeth (2).*

3.27 THE PUKEL-MAN

The Pukel-man is an enchanted stone creature, sited by the track over the ford northeast of the villa. It is more ancient by far than the villa, more ancient than the first Dunadan settlement of the area, dating back to a time when the Druedain lived on both sides of Anduin, a time when Mordor was still a fertile land and the Ephel Duath were young and green and full of life. Now that the Druedain are gone, the Pukel-man's purpose of guarding their ways has also gone. However, their legacy is a hatred of Orcs and other despoilers of beauty; when the Orcs come to this area and start destroying things, it may awaken and start wreaking a terrible vengeance.

Notable Skills: Track 75, Stalk/Hide 75. Ignores bleeding and temperature criticals; all criticals rolled at -10. Fights with bare (stone!) hands, consider them to be +10 maces. Cannot move more than 1000' from the ford except up or down the stream, in the water. Can be active for up to 5 hours.

3.3 LAYOUTS OF MAL MALIARNIN AND ONDERYTH DUATH

The action in the adventure takes place on the northern fringes of Taur Ithilien (S. "Ithilien Wood"). This woodland area edged with heath and moor rises quite steeply from the banks of Anduin to the Ephel Duath. The mountains loom up ominously on the eastern flank, a barrier to the withered and barren land of Mordor.

The Wood can appear rather dark and mistrustful itself from a distance, particularly the northernmost stretches, where sombre trees such as larches, cypresses, holly and box make up the bulk of the forest. The roots of the mountains are shadowed and black. The heathlands are tumbled and uneven, with outcroppings of rock, all overgrown with ling, broom, heather and cornel with its red berries and dull flowers. The air is fresh and fragrant with the wonderful scent of heather and the brose or sap of small pine trees that grow in clumps and stands dotted over the landscape.

All the land down between the river and the mountains is folded and riven by valleys, with raised hills and hogsbacks swelling upwards. The broken canopy of green is rolled and tossed like a stormy sea, the hilltop copses of beech standing out with their lighter leaves like spume on the waves' crests. In the clayey hollows there is boggy ground and grassy glades ringed by oaks, many ancient and of tremendous girth.

Ploughing north through the forest along the mountains' feet is the North Road. Coming from the Crossroads close by Minas It hil, it is a well-made road that has already stood for centuries, made from well-set paving slabs settled in gravel dredged from the many streams that it crosses. There are wayside pillars at regular intervals marking the passing of each mile; these are weathered and worn but their inscriptions and decoration are still just visible. Where a hill must be skirted, the road usually cuts through at least some of the slope leaving steeply edged banks covered with bracken, heather and small trees such as silver birch. Where there is a stream or watercourse to cross, the road leaps over a wide, shapely arch of sturdy and enduring masonry. All these stone features bear the moon-symbol of Ithilien, often laced with greenery; leaves, vines and fruits were popular with the stonemasons and sculptors who worked on the road in the first centuries of the Third Age.

One of the most striking features along the road is *Andiant* (S. "Long Bridge"), a stone viaduct some thousand yards long and just over a hundred feet high at the mid-point. Its great piers of stone rise from the floor of the Nan Ascarwing amid ferns and bullrushes, mossy columns of perfectly jointed masonry. The bridge itself is quite safe and sound, but unwary travellers are known to have come to grief during the occasional violent winds and storms which sweep through the area. The wall at the side is little more than a ledge one yard high. On the bridge, the road narrows to seven yards wide.

On the northern edge of the Wood are the Cypress Hills (S. “Tyrn Tharnion”), the last prominent features before the blasted expanses of the Dagorlad northwest of Mordor’s Black Gate. These rounded uplands are thick with tharnion (cypresses), thonion (pines) and cuedhion (cedars). These and other resinous trees, together with sweet-smelling herbs and shrubs in broad glades and dells where springs issue and brooks gather, lend an enchanted feeling to the hills, a feeling of peace and tranquility unexpected in a place so close to Sauron’s realm of old. On the southern knees of the Hills lie the vineyards of Mar Maliarnin.

South of the Cypress Hills is the valley of Sir Ascarwing, the major water draining the area. Many streams and brooks feed the river, from the Mountains of Shadow, the Cypress Hills, the *Emyn Fuin* (S. “Hills of Gloom”). The river is a rushing torrent most of the year, late summer being the only time when the plentiful evening and morning rains are lessened. The valley is a riot of life, a splendid celebration of the rich diversity of woodland plants created by Yavanna and her Maiar assistants. All the ground is mantled with a tapestry of colors; plants of every shape and size and scent, creeping and erect, broad-leaved bay and dark olive, thorny juniper and slender, needled larches.

Beside the river are numerous pools and hollows bemossed and deep with spongy worts and sphagnum. In the pools float lilies and water violets shadowed by willowherb and yellow-cress; asphodel with its pale and creamy inflorescences, irises with their indigo flags and curved, scimitar-like leaves await only the warm breeze of spring to waft them gently. At its best Ithilien is a paradisaal garden, a perfect mixture of deep green grass, flowers, sturdy trunks and leafy branches. And there are no dangerous beasts to threaten the traveller; the only threats are those on two legs.

3.31 LAYOUT OF MAR MALIARNIN ESTATE

Mar Muliarnin (S. “House of Wine-pressing”), The Winehouse lies in a sheltered vale overlooking Nan Ascarwing. The house is a villa built in the traditional Dunedain style: expansive, with long, low buildings surrounding an enclosed courtyard. The villa has every amenity, including two bath-houses, a small shrine, gardens, a park and, of course, extensive cellars. The workrooms where the wines and ales are produced are all in the villa’s square compound.

1. The Villa. The villa is fully detailed below (see 3.32). It is a stone structure with plastered walls cream in color, mostly covered with creeping plants such as purple-flowering clematis, *nellum* (S. “running ivy”) and *milithrug* (Rh. “honeysuckle”). The roof has a shallow slope and deep eaves to give shelter when the sun is at its hottest and is made of baked clay tiles a dull brown-orange in color. The whole building is no more than 10’ or so tall, but has a large area underground. Lining the track just before the gates to the villa are four pairs of great lime trees, each over 200 years old.

2. Gardens. The villa has truly excellent gardens, until recently supervised by a staff of six gardeners. There are four plots; one walled, the others surrounded by hedges of box trees. The walled garden contains all the most fragile and precious herbs, including some healing herbs. Most are used for flavoring ales, wines and, most of all, liquors. In the hedged gardens grow hops, sage, sweet heather, myrtleberries, redcurrants, bilberries, thyme, marjoram, white and green parsley, sloe bushes, towering *elderflowers* (S. “rimaurlos”), *chicory* (S. “inty bath”), burdock and dandelion. A sideline of the villa’s winemaking operation is the production of scents and perfumes, used for flavorings and also for cosmetics: Mal Maliarnin produces pot pourris, lavender dollies, essential oils, soaps and waters.

At the top end of the gardens are three large cisterns supplying water under pressure to the villa through underground conduits. The cisterns are filled by two springs, and also by rainwater. One supplies the north wing (Ale and Wine Rooms and Perfumery), another the bath houses and the third the heating and kitchens.

3. Vineyards. The southerly and westerly faces of the hill behind the villa are set with vines and trellises. Here the grapes for the delicious wines are grown and picked. Between the courtyards run well-worn tracks suitable for the donkeys laden down with heavy baskets and small handcarts trundled by weary servants at the end of a long summer’s day. Between the individual plots stand olive trees and tall sunflowers, as well as a cover of goat’s nettle which keeps not only goats, but most other small browsing creatures, away from the precious vines and their succulent fruits.

4. The Dam. The Dam is of fairly old construction; pale stone carved with delightful imagery: flowers, nymphs, fish and birds abound in bas relief all along its length. Although not tall, it is about 150 yards broad, holding back a swathe of water to form a tranquil pool in a semi-wild park. A gushing, gurgling spout sculpted in the form of a large frog forms the exit for the stream in the centre of the Dam. At this point it broadens from being a yard-wide path with a balustrade of twisted columns. There is a small terrace covered with a bower of rose briars and honeysuckle grown from trenches of earth set in the stonework.

5. The Lake and Park. The Lake (Lin Iarenen) is a long, narrowing pool. It is not very deep, seldom exceeding more than twenty feet, and has a thick silt all over its bottom. About the east side of the lake are great clusters of flag-irises and tall reed beds. On the still surface of the water float variegated water lilies, some quite wide, with leaves two feet in diameter. Tethered to the bank of the Lake close to the Dam are two smallish punts, each suitable for two people at most. Long poles to propel them are laid within the punts.

The Lake has a good variety of wildlife, with small rodents such as voles, raccoons and shrews, and also birds. There are six or seven species of duck, some geese, a pair of herons, various wading birds including Ithilien’s rare blue plover, and also small diving birds such as the royal kingfisher and the inkspot crake. Occasional visitors include the magnificent pink flamingoes from Ethir Anduin, stately cranes and the curious little egret.

The Park is a semi-wild and mostly unmanaged area up the western side of the Lake. A flagstone path runs along the lakeshore for a quarter of a mile and leads on a small distance to a summerhouse. The summerhouse is round, built from sandalwood and cedarwood with special shutters made from resin-treated parchment. Stretched out tightly, they are highly translucent and in summer allow a gentle light to filter through without the heat of the sun; they also give off a pleasant scent.

The rest of the Park is made up of original trees left from the forest that once grew throughout this dell, separated by glades of grass and plants. Many of the plants are wild, but there are also specially planted beds and herbaceous borders. Indistinct footpaths run here and there through the Park and there are many surprises to be discovered: a tiny spring and rock pool; a grot artificially widened to make a small cavern in which a statue has been set, with ledges for candles and rushlights all about the walls; rustic seats and benches covered by cunningly constructed pergolas, wound with bindweed; and a huge horn carved from dark stone in whose earth-filled mouth are planted a profusion of different orchids timed to flower for eight months of the year.

6. The Track and Ford. The main tracks to the villa run down from the North Road some miles north of Andiant and up from a small wooden bridge over *Iarenen* (S. "Berrywater"). The two tracks meet above the Park and below the villa itself, the relatively steep grades making the track negotiate a number of long winding sections so that the heavily laden wagons bringing supplies (including grains for the beer-making) or distributing produce can be more easily drawn. The tracks are well worn and occasionally have some grit or gravel to make a firmer surface. They are also marked by small rounded stones surmounted by metal crescents.

The southerly track carries on down beside the stream until it joins Sir Ascarwing; the northern track crosses the stream at Iach Iarenen. It is usually easy to cross here, as large stone slabs, now somewhat worn and rutted, have been sunk into the stream's bed for carts and wagons, and for travellers on foot there are stepping-stones. However, after heavy rains the stream can be unexpectedly vigorous, ready to sweep the unwary away and toss them a mile or so downstream to the cataract at the head of the Lake.

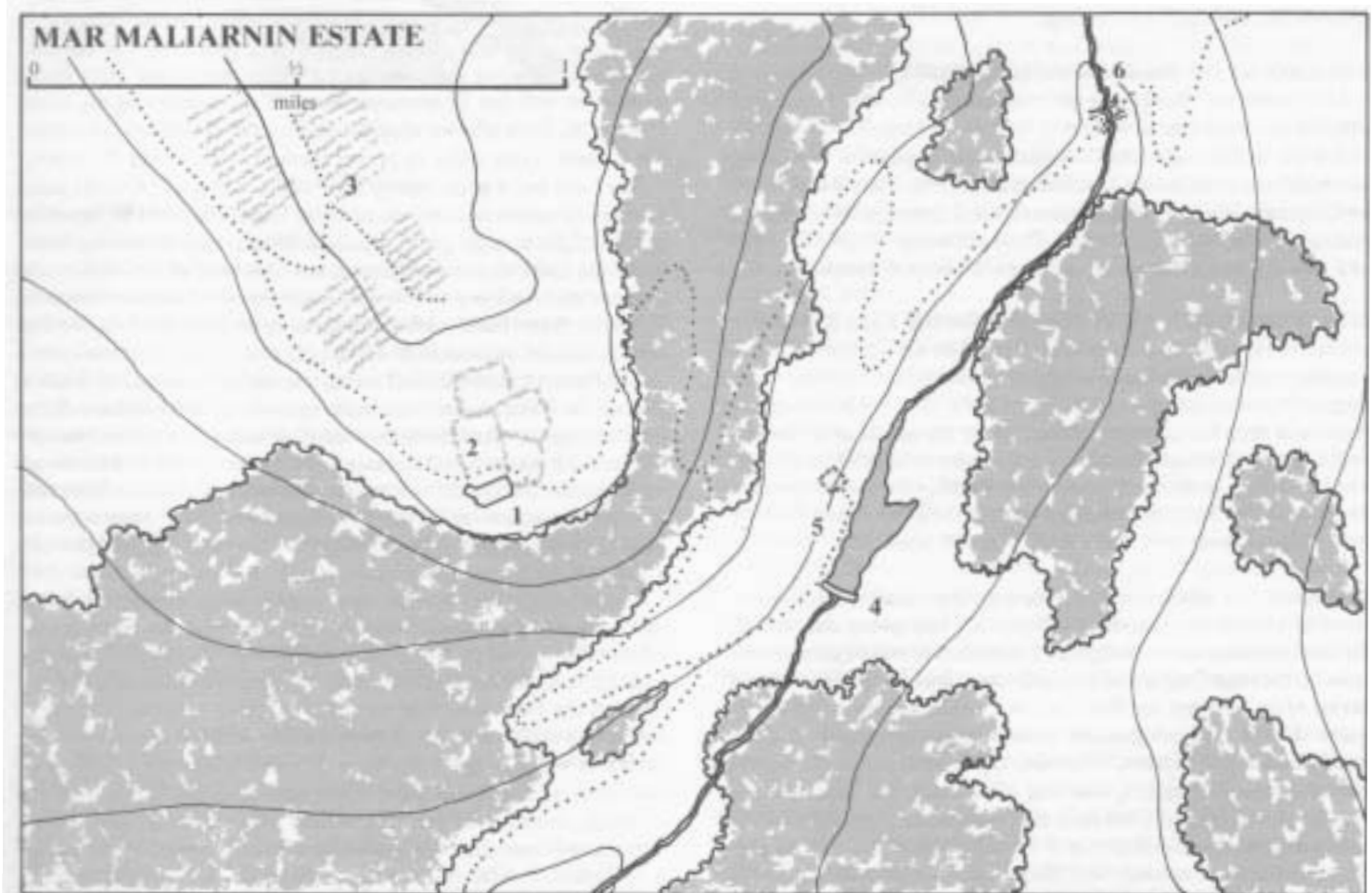
Standing beside the ford is a relic of days when the Woses lived on both sides of Anduin and not just in Druadan Forest. A graven stone Pdkel-man, dull grey and smooth yet somehow unweathered, keeps guard over the crossing from the shelter of an outspread cypress. The ground around it is peculiarly clear of tall or creeping plants.

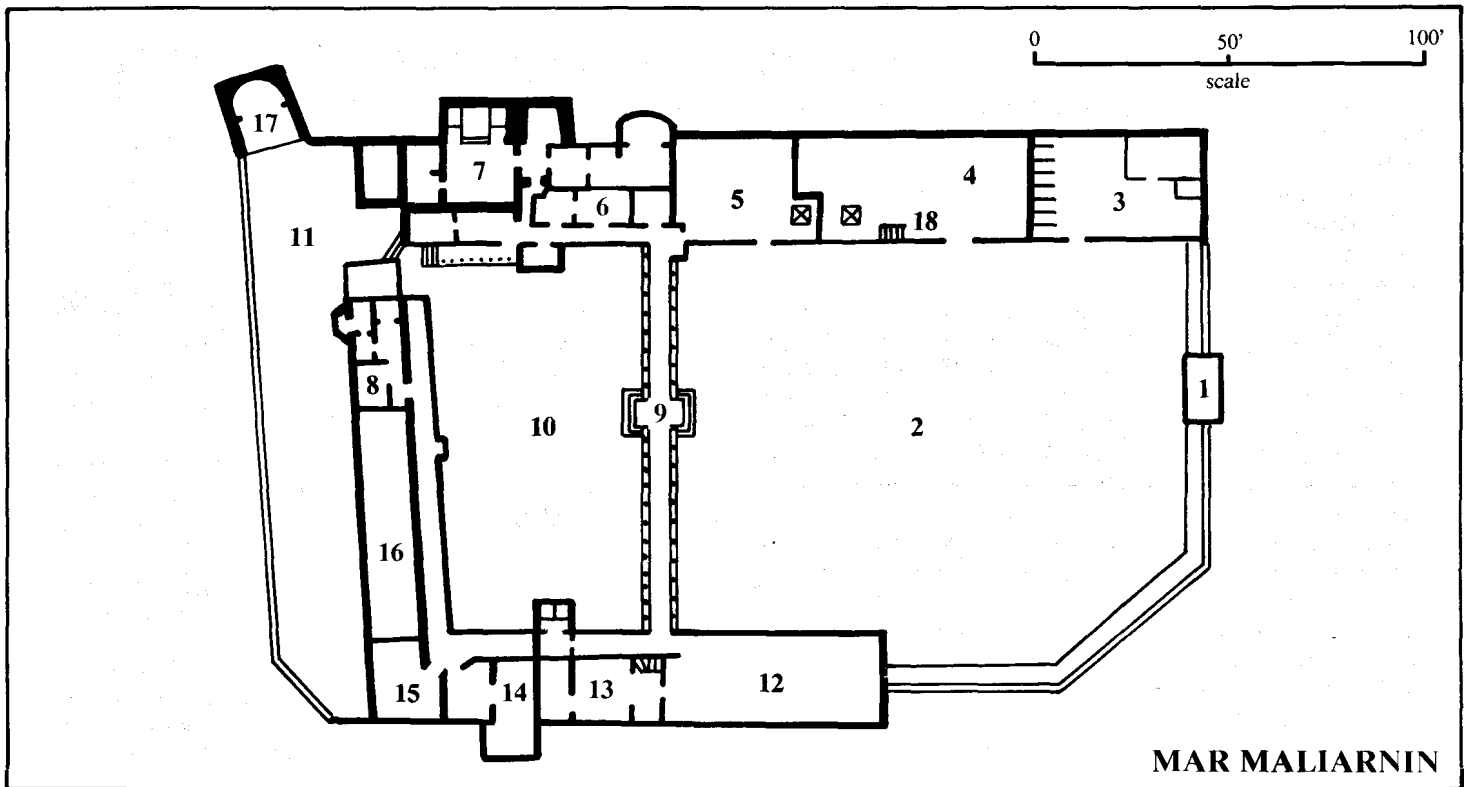
3.32 LAYOUT OF THE VILLA AT MAR MALIARNIN

1. Gatehouse. The presence of a gatehouse in the courtyard wall is formal rather than functional. The gates are a pair of 8' wide by 9' high cedarwood doors. At night they are barred simply to keep wild animals out of the yard. There are small rooms on either side of the gates; these are used for the storage of equipment used in house and garden maintenance, such as barrows, a ladder, shovels, mallets, supplies of pegs, nails, stakes, rope, twine and so on. There is also a latrine in the gatehouse. A small door opens in the right-hand gate, just 5' x 2'.

2. Outer Court. The outer courtyard is bounded by the 10' plastered wall and parts of the north and south wings and floored with packed dirt. Between the gatehouse and the north wing there are two great wine presses stored beneath canvas sheets. Also stored in the courtyard may be up to three wagons and carts, the draft horses or oxen stabled in the north wing.

3. Stables. The far end of the north wing is occupied by stabling room for oxen and horses. There are eight stalls for the latter and a larger open byre for the former. The stables include a good supply of fresh straw in racks overhead; the straw is cropped in pastures in the upper Nan Iarenen every fall. There is also tack for the horses here, and a small boarded area in the hayloft where a stablelad sleeps.





MAR MALIARNIN

4. Wine Room. This large workroom is where the vats of pressed grape juice are prepared and fermented. The great presses remain outside, but during the harvest (which is staggered over several weeks) the juice is brought in here and graded, then divided up into vats for the processing which turns it into wine. The special wines are also prepared here, and there are various pieces of machinery, utensils and articles used in these varying processes. In the stone-flagged floor are two large trapdoors. One has steps leading down to the cellars (#18), the other is a straight drop down, with a rope and pulley attachment connected to an overhead beam. Another feature of the room is the large washing tank where bottles and other containers are rinsed out to be reused.

5. Ale Room. Another large workroom with vats of metal and large kettles for the distillation of spirits. The Ale Room in fact is used for many purposes, and not just brewing. A mill for crushing and cracking the hops and grain which must be laboriously hand-cranked stands in one corner. In another two coopers work constructing all sizes of barrels and tuns, from small kegs holding half a gallon to vast butts used in the initial drawing of ale and Maliarnin wine. There is a straight-down trapdoor here like that in the Wine Room, so barrels and tubs can be lowered to the cellars.

6. Perfumery. These small interconnecting rooms together form an aromatic workshop where a hundred different flowers and herbs are pressed and dried and crushed, their oils and essences extracted and all manner of scented cosmetics produced. There are small drying ovens built into the walls of one room, opposite which is a long bench fitted with scales and measures, mortars and pestles, tiny mills for grinding, scrapers and choppers. In the adjacent room are stills and retorts for the separation of the essential oil of plants and herbs. Above the ovens of the drying room are tanks of rainwater; the steam driven off these tanks drives an air fan and then condenses down conduits in this room to vats of purified water. Fresh water for washing is also supplied to this room under pressure from the cisterns at the top of the gardens.

7. Baths of Dry Heat. This collection of rooms formed one of the two bath-houses (the baths of damp heat are #8). Here the bather is subjected to a hot, dry heat which induces violent perspiration, then has to plunge immediately into a bath of cold water. The bath-house is fronted onto the inner courtyard by a colonnaded walk which leads to the west wing and along to the adit (#9).

The baths are heated by an underfloor steam system. All the floors are raised on low columns made from clay tiles. The furnace, located next to the Perfumery, is supplied with water which is turned to steam and fed through channels under the reception room and dressing room to the *urbenen-rond* (S. "hall of dry heat") where the whole floor and both the walls are heated by the confined steam. There are stone benches with wooden seats here, and niches cut into the wall where oil lamps are placed. In here fragrant herbs (from a selection available) are placed in order to lend a peaceful, relaxing or invigorating atmosphere as desired.

The reception room is a pleasantly warm place for relaxing. A rounded alcove is set with comfortable sofas and cushions, there is also a standing harp in one corner, next to an open chest full of extra cushions and rugs. There is also a cupboard containing wine pitchers and cups. The dressing room is warmer still. Around the walls are hooks and racks for discarded clothing, and long, low lockers containing fresh garments. The floor has a splendid mosaic showing Ulmo rising from the sea. This is rather appropriate as there are three plunge baths off the north side of the room. A large square bath is flanked by two smaller D-shaped pools. All the pools have steps leading into them and are about 5' deep at most.

Included in the furnace room is an area for the washing and drying of clothes and household linen.

8. Baths of Damp Heat. This bath suite is entered through a passage reached by steps and a door from the main external corridor. The bath-house comprises a series of rooms in which the heat is graded from warm to very hot, inducing a heavy perspiration to cleanse the pores. The process is then reversed to induce cooling and finally the pores are closed by a cool bath.

The first room is the dressing room, heated by a fire fed from the outside (actually a small furnace). This room is rather more functional and less decorated than the dressing room in #7. Here there are towels and clean robes in perfumed lockers; the Dunedain of the villa habitually take a bath of this sort after a day's work (or sport) changing into fresh clothes for the evening. The dressing room is connected to the heated rooms by the *himith-rond* (S. "cold room"), a passage and open area including a bath of cool water. The bath is 4' deep with two internal steps. It has a lining of tiles glazed in bright green and pale blue and is supplied from a tank located near the furnaces at the north end of the bath-house, and thus is not as cold as the water straight from the cisterns which fills the baths in #7. From the *himith-rond* an arch opens into the *pernor-rond* (S. "warm room"), where the temperature is moderately high. Heating flues running up the walls from floor level and the steps leading into the room are a clue to the raised floor allowing steam to circulate beneath. Here the steam is allowed to percolate into the room producing the "damp heat". The *pernor-rond* has a mosaic floor with an abstract design formed from a pattern of leaves. The final room is the *mennor-rond* (S. "fiercely-hot room"), right by the furnace room and sweltering. There is also a hot semi-circular bath in which the bather can cleanse him or herself.

The furnaces at the end of the block consist of a covered stoking-chamber, with an adjoining fuel-store for faggots of brushwood.

9. Adit. The adit is a covered pathway connecting the north and south wings of the villa and dividing the outer and inner courtyards. The inner court is sited some 3' above the outer, so the adit forms a natural divide atop a wall.

10. Inner Court. The inner courtyard is a paved area, kept clean and neat, and set about with herbs and shrubs in stone troughs. In the courtyard are markings for a sedate yet skillful Dunedain game called *quorhts*. Dark cobbles set between the pavings mark out areas into which heavy discs of wood topped with iron hooks must be slung. The competitors use long (7') poles with a short length of chain at one end, terminating in an iron ring, the ring being used to pick up and then toss the discs. The game combines elements of checkers, billiards and curling, and is said to be very good training for both the mind and the body. A rack of the poles (*quorhtyards*), together with five discs (*quorhtings*) and two mounted abacus scorers stands in the colonnade in front of the baths (#7).

11. Terrace. The terrace is reached up further steps from the inner courtyard, making it 6' above the ground around, which gently shelves away from the villa on the south and western side. The terrace has splendid prospects down Nan Iarenen to Nan Ascarwing and across to the Emyn Fuin, looming in the distance. The terrace has a paved area surrounded by greensward. At the edge is a low (2') wall over which bushy ground plants tumble.

The terrace is set with some wooden furniture sited in a sheltered spot; the Master and his family are often wont to take their midday or evening meals here when the weather is clement.

12. Servants' Hall. The estate's servants all live and sleep in the same communal area. This apparent lack of privacy is in fact the norm and well accepted in their society. The hall is divided off from the rest of the villa by the kitchens and stores. This room is somewhat

higher than the other buildings of the villa and is over 50' long. Married couples curtain themselves off from others at the eastern end of the room; there are many beds, no more than simple wooden slatted frames. The hall is connected to the adit and the kitchens and also has two large doors opening onto the outer courtyard. The room is light and airy with numerous windows and whitewashed walls. When the season is cold, two great hearths are kept burning in the middle of the hall; vents in the roof allow the smoke out.

13. Kitchens. Mar Maliarnin has many hungry mouths to feed and five men and women are kept busy here day in, day out. There is a large circular oven on top of which numerous metal hobs and griddles are set. Against the south wall there is an open hearth for roasting and boiling the huge cauldrons which hang from an iron framework above it. The kitchen, full of hustle and bustle, produces its own bread, serves two good hot meals plus the traditional Dunedain cold breakfast of carved meats, raw vegetables tossed in dressings of honey and herbs, oatcakes or scones and soured milk. Hot meals include roast boar, beef, game birds baked in herbs and wine, deliciously thick and creamy soups, crusty pies snuffed with eggs, ham and vegetables and hotpots of yellow-fatted venison joints and succulent roots, cooked for a day in sealed earthenware vessels.

From the kitchen there are steps down to the cellars (#18). These are located by the door to the outer corridor. Some supplies are also kept in storerooms beside the kitchen, including household linen and foods which are used so often that a supply right at hand is needed, such as flour, fresh vegetables, spices and herbs, wine and so on. More of all these items is stored downstairs.

14. Dining Room. This room and the others of the west wing are all heated by under-floor steam flues extended from the baths (#8). This is something more than a dining room, however, and is perhaps the most splendid room in the villa. The forepart of the room is a large ante-room for entertainment, divided from the dining room proper by projecting pilasters decorated with interlaced bands of red, corresponding to the mosaic strip on the floor which divides the two main mosaic floors.

The floor of the ante-room has an octagonal design. The inner segments display stylised figures of nature spirits in the form of nymphs and dryads, joined by flowing waters, tree branches and swirling clouds. In the centre is the figure of Yavanna, veiled and swathed in green. In each of the four corners a season is represented by a figure of one of the Free Peoples: an Elf for spring with an armful of flowers and a bird perched upon her shoulder, a Woman for summer carrying a garland of blossom and fruits, a Man for fall with a scythe, a sheaf of corn and a vine laden with grapes, a Dwarf for winter, cloaked and hooded with heavy boots holding a hare and a dead branch.

Adjacent to the dining room, on the opposite side of the corridor which opens into the ante-room, is a latrine. It has seating set over a deep sewer and wooden partitions to ensure privacy. There is a pipe supplying running water to complete personal ablutions; it is also used to flush out the latrines on a regular basis.

15. Living Room. The lounge area, used by those members of the household who do not work during some portion of the day, has resting and recreational furniture and furnishings. There are comfortable seats, draperies and silk hangings, several tables, a stone cooler which can be packed with ice to ensure a good supply of cold drinks during the hot months (see the ice room in the cellars, #18), some gaming boards for *mereilles*, chess and *gwithbil*, also called the "game of kings", and several bird cages. Decorations in the room include pale blue painted bands on the wall and potted plants such as hartstongue ferns and miniature orange trees. The room is also used for music and poetry.