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was so moved by the sight of stars twinkling in the sky above a grove of evergreen trees, that he sought to simulate their effect by setting candles on a small

evergreen which he brought into his home.

In Victorian England, the Christmas tree was laden with sweets, fruits and nuts—as well

as dancing candles. These edibles were not eaten until the dismantling of the tree on the Twelfth Night, adding an element of gaiety to the otherwise

sobering activity of putting decorations away until the next year.

Eventually, ornaments made by glassblowers and wood carvers came to replace the edible decorations on Christmas trees. Today, tree-trimming has been elevated to a considerable art form, a medium for the trimmer's expression.

For some, a simple garland made by stringing popcorn and cranberries is an eye-pleasing decoration, while for others, elaborate links of red and green balsa wood appear more festive.

Red ribbons and candy canes may suit one trimmer's taste, while velvet-covered turtle doves and hand-painted wooden figures may suit another's.

The key to tree-trimming is to have fun at it, whether one opts for real candles or twinkling, multi-colored lights; for a strongly-scented Douglas fir or an artificial tree.

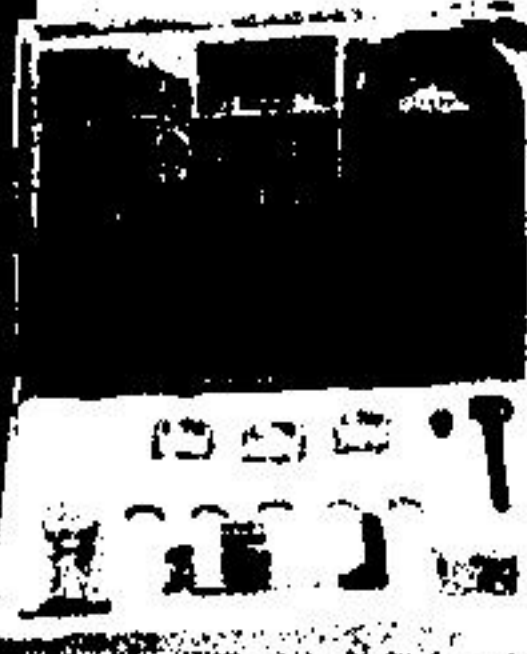
After all, the evergreen is but a symbol of the presence of life in the darkness of winter, the true meaning of the Christmas celebration.



"GATHERING EVERGREENS," an 1858 engraving by Winslow Homer, shows the old-time method of gathering Christmas greens for the home. While the men at left cut down trees—a practice still followed by economically minded Americans—the man and woman to the right weave wreaths of evergreen, possibly laurel, holly or mistletoe. From the New York Public Library Picture Collection.

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