

“We are Going!!!”: Understanding Nineteenth-Century Perspectives on Chinese Immigration Through Book Marginalia

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About *Why and How: Why the Chinese Emigrate, and the Means They Adopt for the Purpose of Reaching America*

- Written by Russell H. Conwell after a world tour for the *Boston Traveller* and published in 1871
- Focuses on both why Chinese people would want to immigrate and how they would reach their destination
 - Significant because any comparable works of the time paid very little attention to how the actual movement of people occurred, only the end result
- Provides a unique journalist’s perspective on the topic, instead of the usual merchants/missionaries
 - Conwell’s biography mentions his attention to detail and how carefully he recorded his interactions
 - *Why and How* includes transcriptions of his conversations with Chinese laborers
- Not as popular as his other works, but generally well-received and promoted
 - Before *Why and How*’s release, an excerpt was reviewed in six columns of an issue of the *Traveller*

Please scan for full paper!



Thank you to Professor Whearty, Special Collections Librarian Jeremy Dibbell, and peer mentors Hana and Aeryn for their assistance with this project!

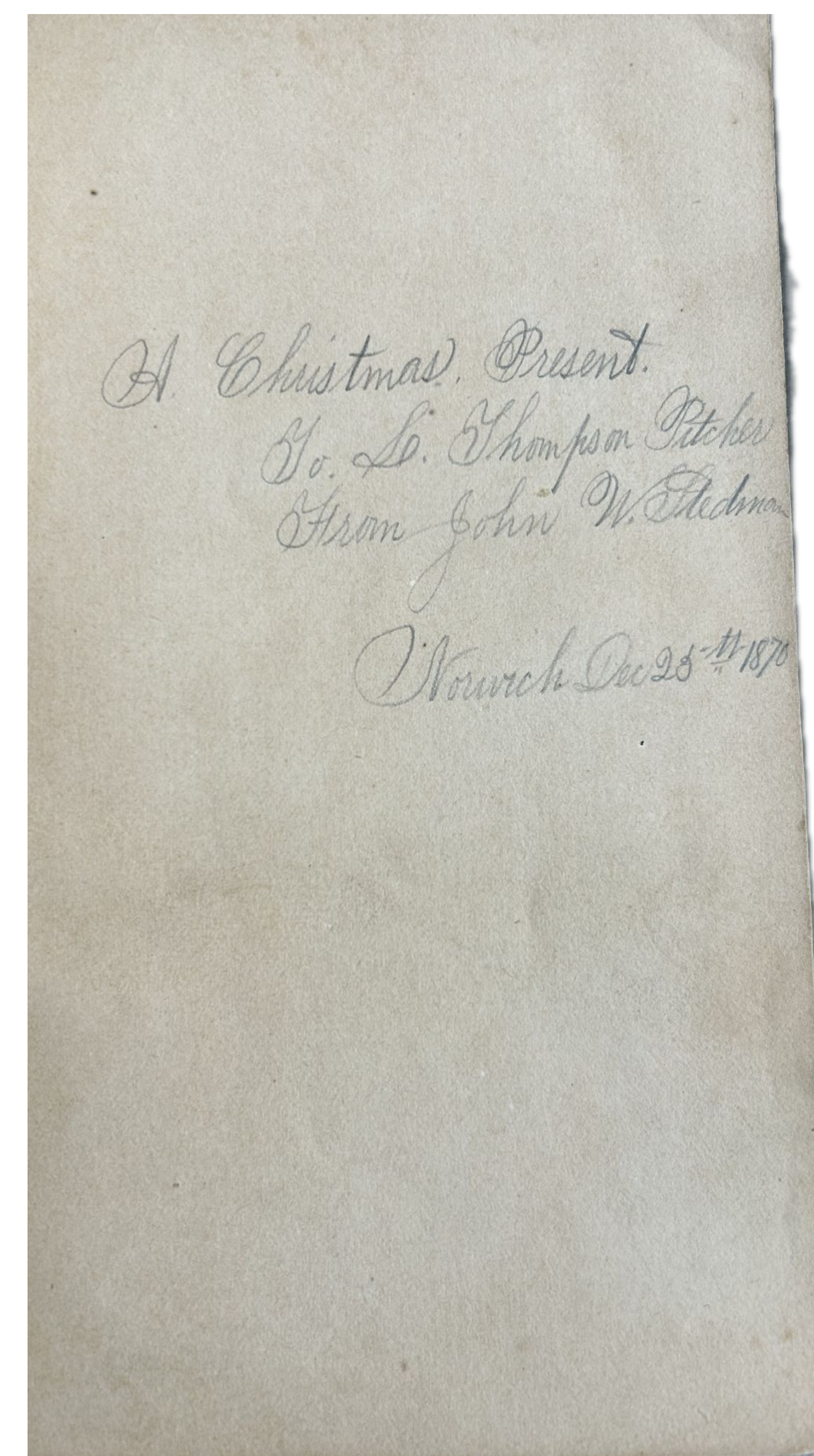
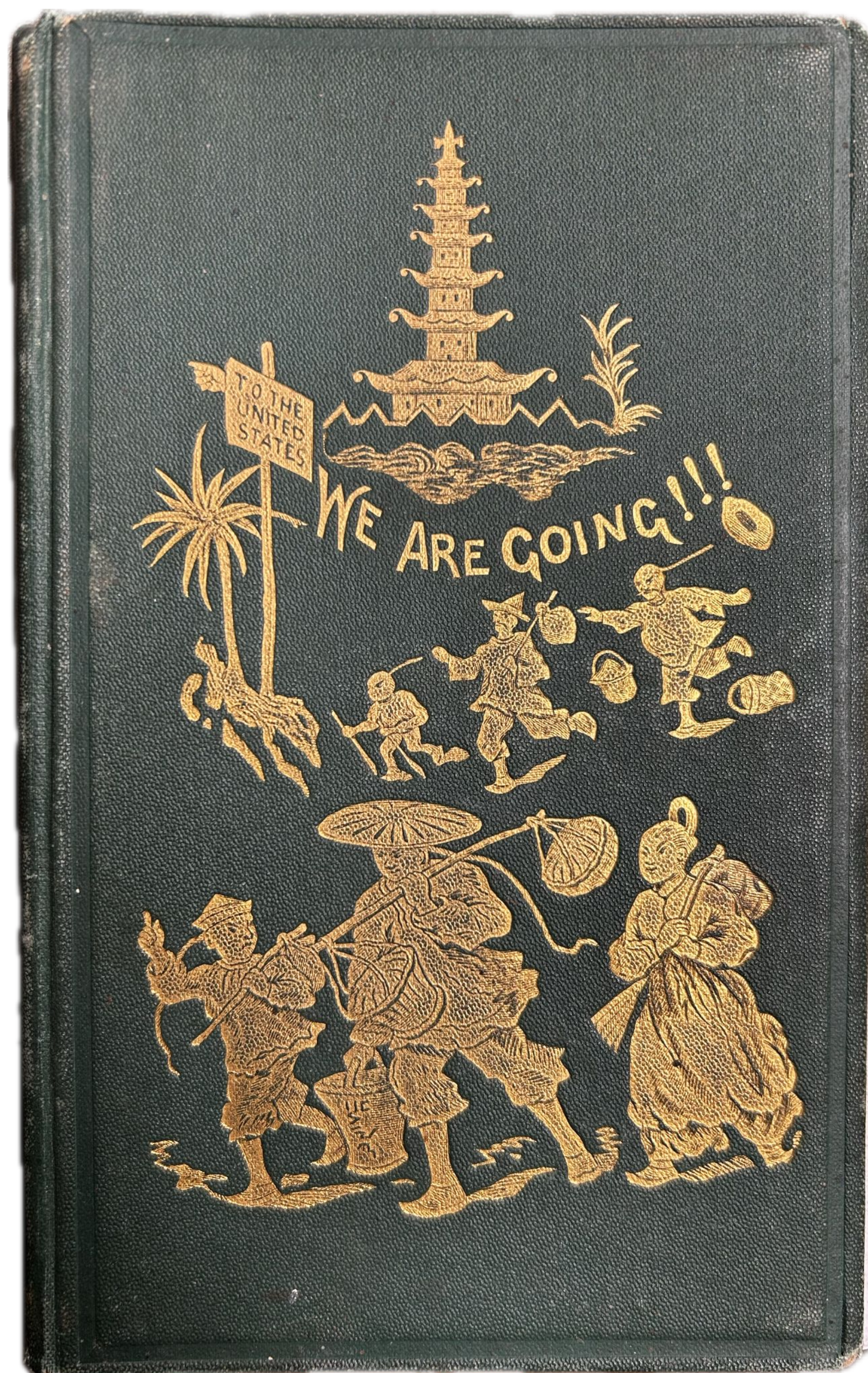
Inscriptions and marginal annotations can provide clues about how readers used the books they had, marking the importance of books as objects that illuminate the daily life of their readers.



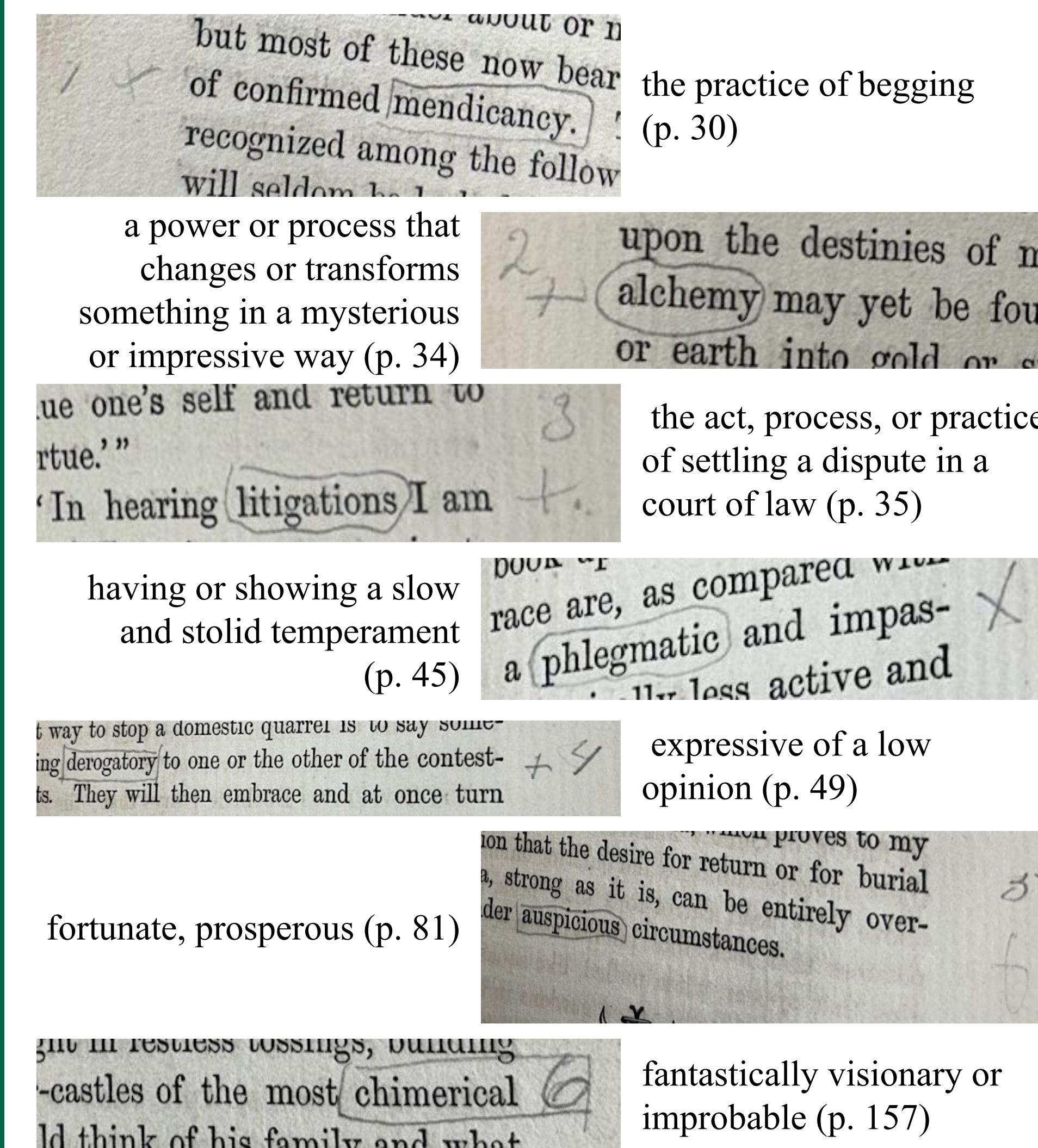
Russell H. Conwell, lithograph by George H. Walker & Co.

About Conwell:

- On his world tour, he also got the inspiration for his speech *Acres of Diamonds*, which he delivered over 6,000 times
- Founded Temple University
- Photographic memory; immigration agent; practiced law after fighting in the Civil War and could recite all of *Commentaries on the Laws of England* by memory
- Taught himself languages so that he could somewhat speak to locals



Front cover, spine, and inscription of Binghamton’s copy of *Why and How: Why the Chinese Emigrate, and the Means They Adopt for the Purpose of Reaching America*, Binghamton University Special Collections



FINDINGS—About the Annotators:

- Through research, I aimed to identify John W. Stedman and L. Thompson Pitcher. I found areas by the name of “Norwich”, narrowing the search field down to America because of the fact that *Why and How* never reached the popularity of Conwell’s other works.
- John Woodhull Stedman and Leverett Thompson Pitcher: Norwich, CT
 - Stedman → editor (published *Stedman’s Directory*); Pitcher → student
- After determining the most likely matches for these people by using maps and a directory, I found all of the annotated words in this copy of *Why and How* and defined them, to get insight into the thought process of the annotator.
- Although some of the words have negative connotations, the orderly, detached way in which the reader marked up the text implies that the reader was simply highlighting words whose definitions were unclear to him
- This copy of *Why and How* can be taken two ways:
 - The fact that *Why and How* was promoted in newspapers and generally well-received → curiosity about Chinese immigration
 - The annotator’s use of *Why and How* to single out new words, without apparent interest in the book’s topic → while the topic was contentious, regular people (especially in places farther away from the heart of the issue) might not have had strong opinions on the matter
 - highlights how marginalia can provide insight into the thoughts of regular people!