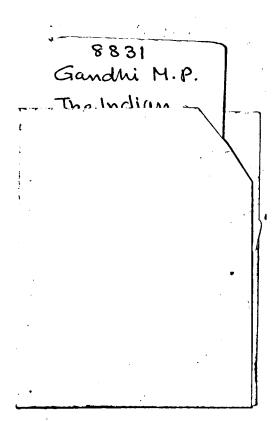
THE NDIAN COTTON TEXTIES INDUSTRY

ITS PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE





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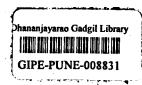
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THE

Indian Cotton Textile Industry

ITS PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE

BY

M. P. GANDHI, M.A., F.R.Econ.S., F.S.S.

Secretary, Indian Chamber of Commerce, Calcutta; Secretary, Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce & Industry, 1929-30; Secretary,
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FOREWORD BY G. D. BIRLA ESQ., M.L.A.

The Indian cotton industry has had a past, as great and glorious as old. Of all the Indian industries of the present day the cotton industry is probably the oldest. Nobody can say who grew the first cotton plant, who spun the first thread, and who wove the first piece of cloth and when all these processes were evolved, but all are agreed over this that it was a denizen of this sacred land who had the honour of discovering and making the first use of cotton and that this happened at a time when other countries were not even civilised. India, therefore, occupies a very important place in the history of the cotton industry, and it is a most painful fact that in spite of that to satisfy her demands she has at present to be dependent on other countries for nearly one-third of her requirements.

How in days of yore the art of spinning had been carried to a fineness enabling one pound of cotton to be spun into a length of 250 miles, how India used to export a large quantity of cloth to England and other foreign countries, and how the Indian cotton industry was systematically crushed by the agents of the East India Company are facts well-known to students of history and well-depicted in this ably written booklet. And if that was the record in days gone by of a half civilised Government having recourse to coercive or terrorizing methods for the purpose, the fiscal policy of the Government of India in modern times has in its own refined way operated to achieve nothing less. Taxing the cotton industry by levying the "Cotton Excise Duty" for a prolonged period and manipulating Exchange by raising the ratio first from about 12d. to 1s. 4d. and then its arbitrary fixation at 2s. with an inevitable failure of the attempt and then by a deliberate appreciation of it to 1s. 6d. are glaring instances of the selfish means adopted to pamper Lancashire at the cost of India. And, if in spite of all these handicaps, the cotton industry of India is not only living but flourishing and gaining ground gradually it is entirely due to the sense of awakening and patriotism among the people on the one hand and the efficient management of mill-owners on the other. Whatever may be the

remarks of the unsympathetic critic against the present management of the cotton mills—and much surely remains to be done to make it as efficient as desirable—any country would reasonably feel proud of the success achieved so far by our cotton mills against heavy odds. All the countries in the world not excluding United Kingdom, have developed their cotton industries under some sort of protection from their respective Governments, and it is in the circumstances a great achievement to the credit of India that she has been able to put up a magnificent struggle for the existence of her industry against vested interests that are well organised and that could always count on the support of the Indian Government, and has eventually emerged so successful from the contest.

The Indian cotton industry, therefore, with very good reason can hold its head high and say with a contemptuous smile to Lancashire: "Wait and see. As you have sown so would you reap". One may hope that the day of industrial awakening is not far off. And, surely if one can claim to have brought that day appreciably nearer, it is of all men Mahatma Gandhi.

The first cotton mill in India was started in 1818 and as an illustration of the proverbial Vedantic phrase एकोइं बहुसान it has now multiplied into hundreds of mills running on the most modern methods. Originally the cotton mills were put up in Bombay and Ahmedabad, although at present Bombay appears to offer no special facility for the development of this industry. At a later stage, people started buildings new mills more up-country than in Bombay with the result that the industry is spread now all over India. A mill which can command raw material and a market for manufactured goods at hand with cheap labour has a greater chance of success than one in Bombay which has got hardly any of the advantages mentioned above. The up-country mills, therefore, are becoming serious competitors to the Bombay Mills. The seriousness of the situation of the Bombay mills was very well reflected in the recent strikes and it is high time, therefore, that Bombay mills instead of working on cloth in which they cannot compete with up-country mills seriously took to the manufacture of fine and fancy goods. The salvation of the Indian mills lies not in internal cut-throat competition, but in presenting a united front against Lancashire and ultimately wresting from it the supremacy which it holds.

As is evident from the bibliography, the author of the present work has done laborious research into the subject, and has thrown a flood of light on the vicissitudes of the industry in the past, by his having access to several not easily accessible literature and documents. He has also made several useful suggestions for the amelioration of the cotton industry of the present time. I congratulate him for writing such an excellent monograph on the subject and hope that those interested in this industry will find it a really useful publication.

(Sd.) G. D. BIRLA.

CALCUTTA, 23rd August 1928.

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PREFACE.

The present monograph on the Indian Cotton Textile Industry. is a thoroughly revised and considerably enlarged edition of my successful competitive prize-essay on the subject submitted in competition for the Ashburner Prize awarded by the Bombay University for the year 1924. It was written at the Benares Hindu University where I was a post-graduate student pursuing my studies for the Master's degree in Political Economy and Political Philosophy. By the rules of the Ashburner Prize Competition, the length of the essay was restricted to 100 F'cap pages and it was therefore impossible to treat the subject there in a fuller manner. Practically the whole of the essay was published in instalments in the columns of the "Indian Textile Journal", a Monthly published from Bombay. After consultation with several friends, I decided in October 1929 to publish the material I had collected in a book-form in the hope that it would prove of interest to all concerned in the Industry. I therefore enlarged and revised the earlier portions of the monograph as much as I could within the short time at my disposal, and rewrote entirely the last three Chapters of the book, based on up-to-date information available from the latest books, publications, Reports and other literature—to which I had easy access in the excellent library of the Indian Chamber of Commerce, Calcutta. I was also assisted in my task by my friend Mr. T. Maloney, the Secretary of the Bombay Millowners' Association, who gladly furnished me with much useful material for the last Chapter of the book. I am also indebted to Mr. J. A. Ritchie, Secretary of the Indian Central Cotton Committee and Mr. A. T. Weston, Director of Industries, Bengal, who verified the statements in my Chapter on "Cultivation of Cotton in India" and "The Hand-loom Weaving Industry" respectively.

I have tried to present a faithful picture of the history as well as the economics of the Industry at its various stages commencing from the remote Vedic period upto the present time and have come to the conclusion that the Indian Cotton Textile Industry—the biggest industry in India, manned, controlled and financed largely by the nationals of the country,—which is in the trough of a wave of acute depression since 1923, due largely to Government's unsympathetic attitude and ill-suited Exchange and Currency policy, deserves immediate help at the hands of the Government who have watched the situation for a long time as

more or less disinterested or unperturbed spectators. fervently appeal to the Government to realise forthwith that it is their bounden duty as trustees of the welfare of the country to lift the Industry out of its present pitiable condition, by granting it a measure of additional protection, even if it be for a temporary period, and to enable it to tide over its difficult period of depression and labour troubles, in as much as the prosperity of the people of India is dependent largely on the prosperity of this Industry. My efforts will have been amply rewarded if the publication of this graph at this juncture is instrumental in helping the Government to make up their mind to do their duty by this Industry in its hour of need by granting it additional tariff protection against foreign competition before it becomes too late, and to thus assist it to develop on sound lines, in the best interests of the country.

It is hardly necessary for me to add that the views expressed by me in this monograph are my own and have no connection with any of the Associations with which I am connected.

135, Canning Street, Calcutta.

Dated 4th February 1930.

M. P. GANDHI.

CONTENTS.

| | | | | | PAGE. |
|---|----------|------------|--------------|--------|------------|
| I.—Early | History | ••• | ••• | ••• | 1 |
| · II.—The Industry under the Moguls | | | | | 8 |
| III.—Industrial Organization | | | | | 17 |
| IV.—East India Company's Trade/ Policy and its Effects on the Cotton Industry (up-to 1757) | | | | | 25 |
| V.—The Sta | te and I | Decline of | the Cotton | Indus- | |
| try under Early British Rule | | | | | 3 5 |
| VI.—The Cotton-Mill Industry (up-to 1914) | | | | | 52 |
| VII.—Cultivation of Cotton in India | | | | | 76 |
| VIII.—The Handloom Weaving Industry | | | | | 82 |
| IX.—The Post-war Cotton-Mill Industry | | | | | 95 |
| Appendix.—Ac | count of | the de | velopment o | f the | |
| Japa | inese Co | tton Tex | tile Industi | ry in | |
| Japan and China | | | | | 125 |
| Index | ••• | ••• | ••• | ••• | i |
| Bibliography | ••• | ••• | ••• | ••• | v |

APPENDIX.

The development of the Japanese Cotton Industry in Japan and China.

The rapid progress of the cotton industry in Japan and China is noteworthy. The number of cotton spinning and weaving mills in Japan has increased from 190 in the year 1919 to 259 in the year 1928. The number of spindles (rings and mules) has gone up from 3,488,262 in 1919 to 6,467,174 in 1928, while the looms have gone up from 44,401 in 1919 to 81,209 in 1928. The paid up capital in Yen has more than doubled itself. In 1919 it was 165,758,695 Yen whereas in 1928 it was 419,792,127 Yen. The reserves have nearly doubled from 139,073,867 Yen in 1929 to 249,978,831 Yen in 1928. The paidup capital of the Mills in the membership with the Japan Cotton Spinners' Association which represents about 97% of the total spindleage in Japan and between 40 and 50 per cent. of the Power Looms, shows an increase from 50,932,238 Yen in 1907 to 376,817,127 Yen in 1928, while the reserves in 1928 have increased to 241,821,054 Yen from 19,120,271 Yen in 1907. The dividends declared by these mills were 20.60% per annum in 1907 to 51.20% in 1918, 50.45% in 1919, 37.20% in 1920, 25% in 1922 while since 1922 they are near about 15% per annum. Indian cotton still finds favour with Japan so long as its parity is not above the American. The gross freight on cotton from Bombay to Japan is 4.56 Yen per bale, and from Karachi to Japan it is 5:40 Yen per bale. The Japanese spindles have been satisfied with 7/8 inches American cotton which is now in general use, and Japan is likely to use increasing quantities of American cotton. During the niums, 1912-16 and 1927-21, it was found that the consumption of American cotton had gone up in Japan by 78% whilst the Indian cotton had witnessed an increase of only 25%

Mixing of cotton is an art of which the Japanese mills are justly proud. Each mill has its own mixings which differ according to the price at which the yarn is to be sold or the purpose for which it is wanted. Frequently two kinds of Indian cotton are mixed such as 50% Comrahs and 50% Bengal. It is also interesting to note that the Japanese mills do no hedging in regard to their purchases of raw cotton. Large quantities of cotton are purchased, and, if prices drop after purchasing, another lot of cotton is purchased and the price is

averaged. This speculation or gamble in the purchase of cotton is one cause responsible for Japan's rapid industrial advance. At the commencement of the War, several, mills purchased their cotton requirements for a year at 30 Yen per picul for fear that the development of hostilities might prevent them from obtaining their regular supply of cotton. In course of time the price of cotton advanced to 100 Yen and over, followed by a still greater advance in prices of yarn. None of this cotton was hedged and this lucky gamble in cotton was responsible for huge profits which enabled the Japanese mills to build up very high reserves amounting to nearly 60% of their paid-up capital, to pay higher dividends and to extend the mills. The European War also accorded to the Japanese industry a great opportunity and led to unprecendented development. Not only did the Japanese manufcturers find themselves freed from competition in their chief market in China, due to the incapacity of England and other regular suppliers to meet the demand, but they were enabled to build up a great trade to substitute goods in other markets, such as India, South America, Africa, Netherlands, East Indies and other countries. Another cause of the rapid development of the mill industry in Japan is their organisation and management. Four millcombines control 60% of the industry. There are three large cotton purchasing firms who also undertake selling of manufactured goods, and who have therefore cut out the intermediaries between themselves and the wholesale dealers in China, India, etc. 'There is also another factor, vis. cheaper cost of spinning and weaving. The cost of erecting a new Factory is about £8/- per spindle including building.

With this super-abundance of their money, the Japanese also built a large number of mills in China which represent more than one-third of the total spindles of China. China has now a tariff autonomy and is very likely to enhance the protective duties on cotton goods like what Japan did and whose example is serving the Chinese Government as an excellent model. Having realised the danger to their export trade in good time and having acquired large sums of money due to the lucky speculation in cotton during the War time, Japan started her own cotton industry in China to take advantage of the cheaper labour conditions and to escape any taxation on her goods exported from Japan to China. The Chinese mills work almost exclusively for the home market, while the Japanese mills both in China and Japan are anxious to develop their export business. The Chinese mills have not yet reached the high standard achieved during

the last few years by the best Japanese mills. Chinese labour is the crudest material in China. China has Labour Unions of a political nature while Japan can boast of an absence of Unions amongst the cotton mill operatives. Living conditions in China are much lower than in Japan. The general lack of school education is prominent and only about 10% of the labour force is able to read and write while in Japan almost all the cotton operatives are literate. China has one advantage over Japan in that it is not dependent for the supply of her raw cotton as she can grow all the cotton needed by her in the country itself, and that she has a huge home market in cotton goods for meeting the requirements of her own 450 million people. The Chinese demand for cotton goods will also increase with the awakening of the masses which is slowly coming. The Chinese mills have not had a prosperous time between 1923-28 owing to the fighting going on in the interior and the labour troubles, but things are improving slowly. The Chinese cotton industry judged by its output occupies the fourth place amongst the world's cotton manufacturing countries.

For a detailed account of the cotton industries of Japan and China, I would recommend to the reader a perusal of "The Cotton Industry of Japan and China" being the report of the journey to Japan and China by Arno S. Pearse, General Secretary of the International Federation of Master Cotton Spinners' and Manufacturers' Associations, Manchester, England, and Report on the cotton spinning and weaving Industry in Japan, 1925-26, by W. B. Cunningham, His Majesty's Consul, Osaka, 1927.

INDEX.

Account of Japanese industry in Cotton, Birth-place of, 1.

Japan and China, 126.

Arrian, quoted, 3.

Cotton, Birth-place of, 1.

Jong stapled—Recent experiments for cultivation Arthasastra, excellence of Cotton Duties controversy, The, 58. Duty Bill passed, 58, 59. Export of, 77. fabrics, trade, manufacture fabrics, 2. ,, Baines, quoted, 12, 33.
Baker, quoted, 8.
Benefit from the E. I. Company's Policy, The, 30.
Bengal, famous for Muslins, 11.
Bengal Trade disorganised, 36. and quality of, in ancient times, 5-7. fabrics. description Bernier, quoted, 23. Chinese Account, 5. Chinese Account, 5.
in India, Cultivation of, 76.
Industry, in India, 2; in
times of Moguls, 8; up to
15th Century, 3; centres
and extent of, 10; state
and decline under early
British Rule, 35.
Industry, East India Company's Trade policy and
its effect on the. 25. about Masulipatam Chintz, 13. description of Karkhanas, 21. Bombay Mill-Strike, 115. Boycott of Raw Materials, 26. British goods-extension of consumption of, 48. Trade in India, conditions its effect on the, 25 and prospects of, 122. Buchanann Dr. Francis, quoted, industry, causes of decline Buddhistic Period-export of Indian of, 47. Cotton during, 2. Calicoes, Indian, Reference of Pliny, Manufacture-Imports of, 63 Spinning, two thousand years ago, 4. Cotton-Mill Industry (up to Pre-war times), The, 52. exportation of, to foreign countries, 12. export from Baroche, establishment. of at dress made of in Alex-Fort Gloster, near ander's invasion, 2. competed with English Calcutta, 52, at Bomcompeted bay, 52. goods, 28. Court of enquiry in the causes of Prohibition of wear by Act the strikes-opinion of the, 119, of Parliament, 31. penalty on the wearer and 120. Cotton-Mill Industry—(Post seller, 32. period), 95. Cotton-Mill Industry, Capital and Labour-Relation of 19, Tapanese-20, 120, T26. Chandra Gupta Maurya, Cultivation of Cotton in India, 76-81. manufacture of cotton at the time of, 2. Currency policy of Government-Preface, p. 110, 111. Customs, Sea and Inland, 37. Christian Era, Cotton Industry in, Cyclopædia of India-Reference of Chapman, S. J. quoted, 75. Chatterton, Sir Alfred, quoted, 86. Commission upon outturns, 70. Dacca muslins, world-famous, 11. Clive Day, quoted, 6, 40. Cloth, production by villagers, 10. Dadan, or advances of indigenous mahajans, 22.

Dalal, or the middle-man, 22. Cloth and Yarn in India, consumption of, 84-85. Devar, Cowasji Manabhai, manage-Commons-House of, Resolution on ment of cotton-mill by, 52. the debate in, 62. Decline of our cotton-manufactures, Commercial colonisation of England, causes of, 47. Defoe, Daniel, quoted, 32. Compulsory Primary Education, 120. De. Webb, quoted, 73. Digby, William, 41. Cotton, Sir Henry, 44.

Domestic Industry system, 20. Dutch export, 26, Dutt, R. C., quoted, 36, 37, 44, 49, 66. Duty, 2½% on goods passing through Sea-ports of Bengal, 37; exempted on importation by Reg. IV of 1815, 38; Company exempted from,—Charter of 1717, 35; application by natives of Calcutta against, 42; equalised,—of export and import, 43. Early History, 1. East India Company—Its policy and its effect on Cotton Industry, 25; progress of, 27; sends weareers to India, 27-28; its policy to popularise its own cloth in India, 30.
Education—among Labourers, 120. Ellenborough, Lord, quoted, 42. England,—opposition in, 28, workmen sent from, 27. English factories in India-Establishment of, 25. Excellence of manufacture.—causes of, 11-12. Excise Duty—The—(up to 1913-14), 73, Imposed, 1896, Repealed 1926, pp. 105-107. Excise duty-Abolition of-observation of Fiscal Commission, 107. Export of Indian Cotton Manufactures, during the 19th century, 45; to foreign countries, 46. Export Markets—India's, 9. Export-duty on Cotton, 81. Export Trade in Bombay-Development of, 116. Fabric, fineness and delicacy of, 15-16. Factory Law, British-application to India, on grounds of humanity, Fawcett Committee, Report of the, 119. Financial Policy criticised—by Government official, 111 (F.N.).
man—obtained by English Firman-obtained English Firman—obtained by Linguister Factory from Moguls, 25; obtained by the Company to trade without duties, 35.

Fiscal Policy of Government, 105.

Fiscal commission—quoted re: excise duty, p. 105, 106, 107. Foreign visitors, Accounts of, 9. Foreign Markets—supplied by, 10. Free-trade in India—Policy of, 41. Gandhi, M. K .- on Khaddar Movement, (Foreword) also 82-86. on reduction of ratio —123 (F.N.). Gangitiki-Greek name for Muslin, Gladstone, Mr.—observation by, in the House of Commons, 61.

Gokhale, Mr. G. K., quoted, 74. Government of India, duty of—The, 123.
Guild system, 17-18.
Guijarat, supply of silk and Cotton stuff from, 13.
Hamilton, quoted, 22, 65.
Hand-loom Industry, a big-employment in ancient times, 7, also quote page from Chapter VIII in 1914 and following years—
Handloom-Weaving Industry—extent improvements and employtent, improvements and employment in, 82-83. Handloom vs. Powerloom, 86.
Hardinge, Lord, referred, 107.
Hardy, Mr. G. S., quoted, 121.
Hastings, Warren, against the policy of Free-trade in India, 41. Herodotus, statement about Indian Cotton by, 2. Hindus, a manufacturing people 3 thousand years ago, 2. House of Commons, Resolution of, The, for reduction of import duty in India, 60. Import and use of Indian fabrics, The, effort to penalise, 33. Imports of Cotton manfacture, 63. India, a complete free-trading country, 62. Indian Cotton Industry-The goal of Indian goods, outcry against, 28; manufactures in Europe, 30; sea-import-duty reduced, 38; protective and prohitive measures against, 39; handicapped by transit duties, 42. clothes, various names of, 4. Cotton-fabrics, the cheapest in England's market, 47. looms, a practical monopoly, manufactures in England, 29; prohibition of, reasons for 30.
Mills, excise duty on, 58. Industrial organisation up to Mogul Period, 17. Commission, Report of, Industry-patronage to, 21; during the period of the Company, 43. in up country centres in relation to Bombay, 114. Inglish, quoted, 62.
Japanese Cotton Industry in Japan and China, Development of, The, 126. competition, imports, exports, 98, 102.

Justinian's Digest of Laws—mention of cloth under duty, 25.

Karkhana, 21; its system, 24. Kasturbhai Lalbhai, Seth, quoted, National income, average of-Indian and of other countries-93 (F.N.). Noyce, Mr. F.—referred, 113. Outcry against Indian goods in 108. Kautilya, Arthasastra, 2. Kelman, J. H., inquiry to Indian goods, quoted, 36. England-Development of the 28. Over production, 69. Labour Legislation, 67. Parliament—Act of—Prohibition of wear of Calicoes, 31. Periplus—the first definite mention etc., disadvantages of, 74. Gazette, quoted, 119. Problem in the Textile the of Cotton in, 3.

Pearse, Arno S. General Secretary,
International Federation of Industry, 118. Lancashire manufacturers,-rivalry among, 56. Lecky—the famous historian, quoted, Master Cotton Spinners' and Manufacturers' 32. Associations. Manchester—Visit to India, for "London Times"-The, quotations studying possible improvements in Cultivation of Cotton, etc., from, 106. Lord's Committee, examination p. 80. Also p. 126. Pherozeshah Mehta, Sir, quoted, 65. before, 41. Lytton, Lord, 61. Machinery, introduction of, by, 47. Pliny's Natural History-mention of Mahabharata, reference of cloth in, export of cloth in, 4. Prohibition of Indian Manufactures, Mahajan, an industrial organiser, Purchasing power of India, reduc-20, 21. tion in, p. 111. Puranas—Reference of Cotton goods Mahatma, Gandhi, Khaddar Movement, (Foreword), also 82-86.

Reduction of Ratio—123 in, 1. Production, statistics of, 82. (F.N.). Pyrard, quoted, 9.
Railway Freights—Reduction of—on
Mill made goods,—112. Malaviya, Madan Mohan, Pandit, quoted, 8. Manu, mention of cloth in, 1. Ramayana, 1.
Ratio, evil effects of, pp. 60, 110,
111; 125; also Foreword by
Mr. G. D. Birla. Manufacture—condition of, 23.

Manufacture of Cotton, in time of Chandra Gupta, 2. Marco Polo, reference of production and manufacture of Cotton in, Raw material—Production v material—Production of, a practical monopoly of India, 6. 5, 13. Martin, quoted, 42. Mercer, Verdict of, 76. Reading Lord-His Excellency the Viceroy—quoted, 170.
Redgrave, Alexanders, quoted, 57.
Renaudot, French writer, statement Milburn, quoted, 9, 10, 13, 45. Mill, James, quoted, 12; on oppressive methods used by Gumasof the garments of Calicut, 4.
Rig Veda, reference to Cotton thas, 22. manufacture in, 1. Select Committee, Remarks of, 36. Shaftesbury, Lord, quoted, 67. Sheshagiri Iyer, Mr., referred, 106. Snowden, Mr. Philip, remarks of, 121. Specific vs. Advalorem Duties-121. Strikes, 178.
Silver-Tax in 1910-11—The, 71.
Spinning and Weaving,—in early days 6; mills in Bombay, 52; also last Chapter. on excise duty, 108; on labour, 120. Mogul Period-Industry of Cotton in, 5, 8; quality of manufacture of Cotton in, 14-16; Companys exempted from duty in. Spinning and Weaving Industry in India, 53; existed before they began trade, 2; taken by many castes as their own profession, Moreland, quoted, 9, 10, 13. Muhammadan Period, industry was very meagre in, 8. Muslins, the earliest among Indian Statute passed in England, against Shipping trade, 6. Indian cloth, 31.
Stratchey, Lord, quoted, 67.
Strikes—outbreak of, see Bombay, Muslin, of Dacca, 3; names of 7; produced in other places than

1925, 1928, 1929, pp. 116-117.

Dacca, 11.

[iv]

Tariff Board—Cotton Textile enquiry
—appointed, 1926, p. 110; Report
published in June 1928, Govt.
Resolution on Report, p. 106;
Majority Report, 112; Revised
decision of Govt., p. 113.

Tariff system—Company's building
up of, 37.

Tariffs, The—57-63; from 1894, 64;
increased on cotton yarns, 113114, 116.

Tavernier quoted, 13; description of
Indian cloth, 15.

Thackersey—Sir Vithaldas, 80.
Thomas, F. W. quoted, 1.

Trade in Cotton—Indian—in the fifth
century B.C., 2.

" policy—E. I. Company's, and
its effect on the Cotton
Industry, 25.

Trade of Bengal disorganised, 36.

Trevelyan, quoted, 37.
Vakil, C. N., quoted, 82.
Varthema, quoted, 12.
Watt, Dr. 5.
Weaving Industry—Affection by excise duty, 71.
Weavers, opposition among, 27.
Wells, H. G., quoted, 2.
Westland, Sir James quoted.
Varn, development of trade in, 26.
, Cotton twist and—duty reduced on 57, 97.
, trade, revival of, 97.
, price of, Japanese and Indian compared, 98.
, import of, increased, as a result of Free-trade, 63; from India stopped by U. K. Government, 96.
, export of, 70; 97-99.

BIBLIOGRAPHY.

(ARRANGED ALPHABETICALLY.)

BOOKS.

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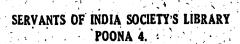
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