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Title: Hanging by a Thread: The Scottish Cotton Industry, c. 1850-1914

Author(s): James J. Smyth .

Source: Business History.

Document Type: Book review

Article Preview :

The Scottish cotton industry has been the poor relation of Lancashire as far as historians are concerned. While there have been endless studies of the English cotton industry there has been relatively far less interest in the Scottish industry; the present monograph by William Knox is, in fact, the first book-length study of the industry. This discrepancy is not hard to explain. Scottish cotton was pretty much dead on its feet by the end of the nineteenth century and had been long surpassed by the much larger and more dynamic industry of Lancashire. Yet in the early nineteenth century Scottish cotton had been more advanced than its southern competitor, and the story of Scotland and Britain's first major industrial casualty is of some importance both in its own right and for what it might tell us about British manufacturing decline in general. This is the twin task that Knox undertakes. The period covered is from 1850, at which point the industry had been displaced by Lancashire cotton and had lost its pre-eminence in Scotland to heavy industry, to 1914, by which time spinning and weaving had more or less disappeared. The book is divided into five chapters which, in turn, provide an

economic overview, examine technological change and the labour process, wages and working conditions, employers, strategy and organisation, and, finally, worker organisation and industrial...

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Smyth, James J. "Hanging by a Thread: The Scottish Cotton Industry, c. 1850-1914." *Business History*, vol. 38, no. 3, 1996, p. 132+. *Academic OneFile*, Accessed 22 July 2018.

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