

speech which Mr. Henry Dundas contributed to the cause of the sooty stranger. On this occasion he impressed me, and I believe all his audience, with such feelings as were produced by some of the most eminent orators of antiquity." Boswell, quite gratuitously, indulges in a reference to the accent of his fellow-countryman. "Mr. Dundas's Scottish accent, which," he observes, "has been so often in vain obtruded as an objection to his powerful abilities in Parliament, was no disadvantage to him in his own country." And again, in another place, Boswell goes out of his way to allude in coarser terms to the same quite natural accident of Dundas's oratory. The truth was, Boswell had been trying to school his own tongue in southern ways, and piqued himself on his supposed superior success in that regard. "A small intermixture," he says, "of provincial peculiarities may, perhaps, have an agreeable effect, as the notes of different birds concur in the harmony of the grove, and please more than if they were all exactly alike. I could name some gentlemen of Ireland," he continues, "to whom a slight proportion of the accent and recitative of that country is an advantage. The same observation will apply to the gentlemen of Scotland. I do not mean," he then adds, "that we should speak as broad as a certain prosperous member of Parliament from that country; though it has been well observed that it has been of no small use to him, as it rouses the attention of the House by its uncommonness, and is equal to tropes and figures in a good English speaker."

The "prosperous member of Parliament" was Dundas, who was returned member for Edinburgh in 1774. He at once took a leading part in the proceedings of the House. "As a public speaker," we are told, "he was clear, acute and argumentative, with the manner of one thoroughly master of his subject, and desirous to convince the understanding without the aid of the ornamental parts of oratory, which he seemed in some sort to despise." He supported the administration of Lord North, and voted for the prosecution of the war against the American colonies. In 1775 he was appointed Lord Advocate for Scotland and Keeper of the King's Signet for Scotland. The Lord Advocate of Scotland, we should observe by the way, holds the highest political office in Scotland, and he is always expected to have a seat in Parliament, where he discharges something resembling the duties of Secretary of State for that quarter of the kingdom. In those days, all the patronage of the crown in Scotland was in his hands.