

## Q. CICERO

### The Roman Candidate

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*Q. Tullius Cicero and his brother to the famous orator were both close watchers of the Roman political scene.*

#### Quintus Cicero, Letter to His Brother Marcus Cicero, 64 BCE

Almost every day as you go down to the Forum you must say to yourself, "I am a *novus homo* [i.e. without noble ancestry]. "I am a candidate for the consulship." "This is Rome." For the "newness" of your name you will best compensate by the brilliance of your oratory. This has ever carried with it great political distinction. A man who is held worthy of defending ex-consuls, cannot be deemed unworthy of the constitution itself. Therefore approach each individual case with the persuasion that on it depends as a whole your entire reputation. For you have, as few *novi homines* have had---all the tax-syndicate promoters, nearly the whole equestrian *ordo*, and many municipal towns, especially devoted to you, many people who have been defended by you, many trade guilds, and besides these a large number of the rising generation, who have become attached to you in their enthusiasm for public speaking, and who visit you daily in swarms, and with such constant regularity!

See that you retain these advantages by reminding these persons, by appealing to them, and by using every means to make them understand that this, and this only, is the time for those who are in your debt now, to show their gratitude, and for those who wish for your services in the future, to place you under an obligation. It also seems possible that a *novus homo* may be much aided by the fact that he has the good wishes of men of high rank, and especially of ex-consuls. It is a point in your favor that you should be thought worthy of this position and rank by the very men to whose position you are wishing to attain.

All these men must be canvassed with care, agents must be sent to them, and they must be convinced that we have always been at one with the *Optimates*, that we have never been dangerous demagogues in the very least. Also take pains to get on your side the young men of high rank, and keep the friendship of those whom you already have. They will contribute much to your political position. Whosoever gives any sign of inclination to you, or regularly visits your house, you must put down in the category of friends. But yet the most advantageous thing is to be beloved and pleasant in the eyes of those who are friends on the more regular grounds of relationship by blood or marriage, the membership in the same club, or some close tie or other. You must take great pains that these men should love you and desire your highest honor.

In a word, you must secure friends of every class, magistrates, consuls and their tribunes to win you the vote of the centuries: men of wide popular influence. Those who either have gained or hope to gain the vote of a tribe or a century, or any other advantage, through your influence, take all pains to collect and to secure. So you see that you will have the votes of all the centuries secured for you by the number and variety of your friends. The first and obvious thing is that you embrace the Roman senators and *equites*, and the active and popular men of all the other orders. There are many city men of good business habits, there are many freedmen engaged in the Forum who are popular and energetic: these men try with all your might, both personally and by common friends, to make eager in your behalf. Seek them out, send agents to them, show them that they are putting you under the greatest possible obligation. After that, review the entire city, all guilds, districts, neighborhoods. If you can attach to yourself the leading men in these, you will by their means easily keep a hold upon the multitude. When you have done that, take care to have in your mind a chart of all Italy laid out according to the tribes in each town, and learn it by heart, so that you may not allow any chartered town, colony, prefecture---in a word, any spot in Italy to exist, in which you have not a firm foothold.

Trace out also individuals in every region, inform yourself about them, seek them out, secure that in their own districts they shall canvas for you, and be, as it were, candidates in your interest.

After having thus worked for the "rural vote", the centuries of the *equites* too seem capable of being won over if you are careful. And you should be strenuous in seeing as many people as possible every day of every possible class and order, for from the mere numbers of these you can make a guess of the amount of support you will get on the balloting. Your visitors are of three kinds: one consists of morning callers who come to your house, a second of those who escort you to the Forum, the third of those who attend you on your canvass. In the case of the mere morning callers, who are less select, and according to present-day fashion, are decidedly numerous, you must contrive to think that you value even this slight attention very highly. It often happens that people when they visit a number of candidates, and observe the one that pays special heed to their attentions, leave off visiting the others, and little by little become real supporters of this man.

Secondly, to those who escort you to the Forum: since this is a much greater attention than a mere morning call, indicate clearly that they are still more gratifying to you; and with them, as far as it shall lie in your power, go down to the Forum at fixed times, for the daily escort by its numbers produces a great impression and confers great personal distinction.

The third class is that of people who continually attend you upon your canvass. See that those who do so spontaneously understand that you regard yourself as forever obliged by their extreme kindness; from these on the other hand, who *owe* you the attention for services rendered frankly demand that so far as their age and business allow they should be constantly in attendance, and that those who are unable to accompany you in person, should find relatives to substitute in performing this duty. I am very anxious and think it most important that you should always be surrounded with numbers. Besides, it confers a great reputation, and great distinction to be accompanied by those whom you have defended and saved in the law courts. Put this demand fairly before them---that since by your means, and without any fee---some have retained property, others their honor, or their civil rights, or their entire fortunes---and since there will never be any other time when they can show their gratitude, they now should reward you by this service.

#### **Marcus Cicero, Letter to His Brother Quintus, 54 BCE**

There is a fearful recrudescence of bribery. Never was there anything like it. On the 15th of July the rate of interest rose from four to eight per cent, owing to the compact made by Memmius with the consul Domitius. I am not exaggerating. They offer as much as 10,000,000 sesterces for the vote of the first century. The matter is a burning scandal. The candidates for the tribuneship have made a mutual compact; having deposited 500,000 sesterces apiece with Cato, they agree to conduct their canvass according to his directions, with the understanding that any one offending against it will be condemned to forfeit by him.