Cicero Readers: Here is a more readable version of two letters that poorly copied into the general reader posted earlier. These are Cicero’s July 65 and December 61 letters, and they can replace pp. 3-4 and 10-12 in the general reader. wn

To Atticus (at Athens)

Rome, July

THE state of things in regard to my candidature, in which I know that you are supremely interested, is this, as far as can be as yet conjectured. The only person actually canvassing is P. Sulpicius Galba. He meets with a good old-fashioned refusal without reserve or disguise. In the general opinion this premature canvass of his is not unfavourable to my interests; for the voters generally give as a reason for their refusal that they are under obligations to me. So I hope my prospects are to a certain degree improved by the report getting about that my friends are found to be numerous. My intention was to begin my own canvass just at the very time that Cincius tells me that your servant starts with this letter, namely, in the campus at the time of the tribunician elections on the 17th of July. My fellow candidates, to mention only those who seem certain, are Galba and Antonius and Q. Cornificius. At this I imagine you smiling or sighing. Well, to make you positively smite your forehead, there are people who actually think that Cæsonius will stand. I don’t think Aquilius will, for he openly disclaims it and has alleged as an excuse his health and his leading position at the bar. Catiline will certainly be a candidate, if you can imagine a jury finding that the sun does not shine at noon. As for Aufidius and Palicanus, I don’t think you will expect to hear from me about them. Of the [84] candidates for this year’s election Cæsar is considered certain. Thermus is looked upon as the rival of Silanus. These latter are so weak both in friends and reputation that it seems pas impossible to bring in Curius over their heads. But no one else thinks so. What seems most to my interests is that Thermus should get in with Cæsar. For there is none of those at present canvassing who, if left over to my year, seems likely to be a stronger candidate, from the fact that he is commissioner of the via Flaminia, and when that has been finished, I shall be greatly relieved to have seen him elected consul this election. Such in outline is the position of affairs in regard to candidates up to date. For myself I shall take the greatest pains to carry out all the duties of a candidate, and perhaps, as Gaul seems to have a considerable voting power, as soon as business at Rome has come to a standstill I shall obtain a libera legatio and make an excursion in the course of September to visit Piso, but so as not to be back later than January. When I have ascertained the feelings of the nobility I will write you word. Everything else I hope will go smoothly, at any rate while my competitors are such as are now in town. You must undertake to secure for me the entourage of our friend Pompey, since you are nearer than I. Tell him I shall not be annoyed if he doesn’t come to my election. So much for that business. But there is a matter for which I am very anxious that you should forgive me. Your uncle Caecilius having been defrauded of a large sum of money by P. Varrius, began an action against his cousin A. Caninius Satyrus for the property which (as he alleged) the latter had received from Varrius by a collusive sale. He was joined in this action by the other creditors, among whom were Lucullus and P. Scipio, and the man whom they thought would be official receiver if the property was put up for sale, Lucius Pontius; though it is ridiculous to be talking about a receiver at this stage in the proceedings. Caecilius asked me to appear for him against Satyrus. Now, scarcely a day passes that Satyrus does not call at my house. The chief object of his attentions is L. Domitius, but I am
next in his regard. He has been of great service both to myself and to my brother Quintus in our elections. I was very much embarrassed by my intimacy with Satyrus as well as that with Domitius, on whom the success of my election depends more than on anyone else. I pointed out these facts to Cæcilius; at the same time I assured him that if the case had been one exclusively between himself and Satyrus, I would have done what he wished. As the matter actually stood, all the creditors being concerned—and that two men of the highest rank, who, without the aid of anyone specially retained by Cæcilius, would have no difficulty in maintaining their common cause—it was only fair that he should have consideration both for my private friendship and my present situation. He seemed to take this somewhat less courteously than I could have wished, or than is usual among gentlemen; and from that time forth he has entirely withdrawn from the intimacy with me which was only of a few days' standing. Pray forgive me, and believe that I was prevented by nothing but natural kindness from assailing the reputation of a friend in so vital a point at a time of such very great distress, considering that he had shewn me every sort of kindness and attention. But if you incline to the harsher view of my conduct, take it that the interests of my canvass prevented me. Yet, even granting that to be so, I think you should pardon me, "since not for sacred beast or oxhide shield." You see in fact the position I am in, and how necessary I regard it, not only to retain but even to acquire all possible sources of popularity. I hope I have justified myself in your eyes, I am at any rate anxious to have done so. The Hermathena you sent I am delighted with: it has been placed with such charming effect that the whole gymnasium seems arranged specially for it. I am exceedingly obliged to you.

To Atticus (in Epirus)

Rome, 5 December

Your letter, in which you inclose copies of his letters, has made me realize that my brother Quintus's feelings have undergone many alternations, and that his opinions and judgments have varied widely from time to time. This has not only caused me all the pain which my extreme affection for both of you was bound to bring, but it has also made me wonder what can have happened to cause my brother Quintus such deep offence, or such an extraordinary change of feeling. And yet I was already aware, as I saw that you also, when you took leave of me, were beginning to suspect, that there was some lurking dissatisfaction, that his feelings were wounded, and that certain unfriendly suspicions had sunk deep into his heart. On trying on several previous occasions, but more eagerly than ever after the allotment of his province, to assuage these feelings, I failed to discover on the one hand that the extent of his offence was so great as your letter indicates; but on the other I did not make as much progress in allaying it as I wished. However, I consoled myself with thinking that there would be no doubt of his seeing you at Dyrrachium, or somewhere in your part of the country; and, if that happened, I felt sure and fully
persuaded that everything would be made smooth between you, not only by conversation and mutual explanation, but by the very sight of each other in such an interview. For I need not say in writing to you, who knows it quite well, how kind and sweet-tempered my brother is, as ready to forgive as he is sensitive in taking offence. But it most unfortunately happened that you did not see him anywhere. For the impression he had received from the artifices of others had more weight with him than duty or relationship, or the old affection so long existing between you, which ought to have been the strongest influence of all. And yet, as to where the blame for this misunderstanding resides, I can more easily conceive than write: since I am afraid that, while defending my own relations, I should not spare yours. For I perceive that, though no actual wound was inflicted by members of the family, they yet could at least have cured it. But the root of the mischief in this case, which perhaps extends farther than appears, I shall more conveniently explain to you when we meet. As to the letter he sent to you from Thessalonica, and about the language which you suppose him to have used both at Rome among your friends and on his journey, I don’t know how far the matter went, but my whole hope of removing this unpleasantness rests on your kindness. For if you will only make up your mind to believe that the best men are often those whose feelings are most easily irritated and appeased, and that this quickness, so to speak, and sensitiveness of disposition are generally signs of a good heart; and lastly—and this is the main thing—that we must mutually put up with each other’s gaucheries (shall I call them?), or faults, or injurious acts, then these misunderstandings will, I hope, be easily smoothed away. I beg you to take this view, for it is the dearest wish of my heart (which is yours as no one else’s can be) that there should not be one of my family or friends who does not love you and is not loved by you.

That part of your letter was entirely superfluous, in which you mention what opportunities of doing good business in the provinces or the city you let pass at other times as well [89] as in the year of my consulship: for I am thoroughly persuaded of your unselfishness and magnanimity, nor did I ever think that there was any difference between you and me except in our choice of a career. Ambition led me to seek official advancement, while another and perfectly laudable resolution led you to seek an honourable privacy. In the true glory, which is founded on honesty, industry, and piety, I place neither myself nor anyone else above you. In affection towards myself, next to my brother and immediate family, I put you first. For indeed, indeed I have seen and thoroughly appreciated how your anxiety and joy have corresponded with the variations of my fortunes. Often has your congratulation added a charm to praise, and your consolation a welcome antidote to alarm. Nay, at this moment of your absence, it is not only your advice—in which you excel—but the interchange of speech—in which no one gives me so much delight as you do—that I miss most, shall I say in politics, in which circumspection is always incumbent on me, or in my forensic labour, which I formerly sustained with a view to official promotion, and nowadays to maintain my position by securing popularity, or in the mere business of my family? In all these I missed you and our conversations before my brother left Rome, and still more do I miss them since. Finally, neither my work nor rest, neither my business nor leisure, neither my affairs in the forum or at home, public or private, can any longer do without your most consolatory and affectionate counsel and conversation. The modest reserve which characterizes both of us has often prevented my mentioning these facts; but on this occasion it was rendered necessary by that part of your letter in which you expressed a wish to have yourself and your character “put straight” and “cleared” in my eyes. Yet, in the midst of all this unfortunate alienation and anger on his part, there is yet one fortunate circumstance—that your determination of not going to a province was known to me and your other friends, and had been at various times asserted by yourself; so that your not being with him may be attributed to your personal tastes and judgment, not to the quarrel and rupture between you. So those
ties which have been broken will be restored, and ours which have been [90] so religiously preserved will retain all their old inviolability. At Rome I find politics in a shaky condition; everything is unsatisfactory and foreboding change. For I have no doubt you have been told that our friends, the equites, are all but alienated from the senate. Their first grievance was the promulgation of a bill on the authority of the senate for the trial of such as had taken bribes for giving a verdict. I happened not to be in the house when that decree was passed, but when I found that the equestrian order was indignant at it, and yet refrained from openly saying so, I remonstrated with the senate, as I thought, in very impressive language, and was very weighty and eloquent considering the unsatisfactory nature of my cause. But here is another piece of almost intolerable coolness on the part of the equites, which I have not only submitted to, but have even put in as good a light as possible! The companies which had contracted with the censors for Asia complained that in the heat of the competition they had taken the contract at an excessive price; they demanded that the contract should be annulled. I led in their support, or rather, I was second, for it was Crassus who induced them to venture on this demand. The case is scandalous, the demand a disgraceful one, and a confession of rash speculation. Yet there was a very great risk that, if they got no concession, they would be completely alienated from the senate. Here again I came to the rescue more than anyone else, and secured them a full and very friendly house, in which I, on the 1st and 2nd of December, delivered long speeches on the dignity and harmony of the two orders. The business is not yet settled, but the favourable feeling of the senate has been made manifest: for no one had spoken against it except the consul-designate, Metellus; while our hero Cato had still to speak, the shortness of the day having prevented his turn being reached. Thus I, in the maintenance of my steady policy, preserve to the best of my ability that harmony of the orders which was originally my joiner’s work; but since it all now seems in such a crazy condition, I am constructing what I may call a road towards the maintenance of our power, a safe one I hope, which I cannot fully describe to you in a letter, but of which I will nevertheless give you a hint. I cultivate close intimacy with [91] Pompey. I foresee what you will say. I will use all necessary precautions, and I will write another time at greater length about my schemes for managing the Republic. You must know that Lucceius has it in his mind to stand for the consulship at once; for there are said to be only two candidates in prospect. Cæsar is thinking of coming to terms with him by the agency of Arrius, and Bibulus also thinks he may effect a coalition with him by means of C. Piso. You smile? This is no laughing matter, believe me. What else shall I write to you? What? I have plenty to say, but must put it off to another time. If you mean to wait till you hear, let me know. For the moment I am satisfied with a modest request, though it is what I desire above everything—that you should come to Rome as soon as possible.

5 December.

Marcus Tullis