

# The Phoenix

by Lord Peter of Ravenna, Master of Memory.

The Artful Memory of the most illustrious Doctor of Both Laws & soldier, Lord Peter of Ravenna, who ordinarily reads Canon Law in the most celebrated University of Padua, is contained in this booklet.

And since there is one Phoenix and this is one booklet, it is pleasing to give it the name of the Phoenix.

**Eleonora of Aragon, Duchess of Ferrara, etc.** That which has been granted to the human race by the Immortal God, the giver of all good things, is that very many excellent men have emerged in the lands of the world from the constitution of the world up to this age. Among whom there is now present the respected knight of the golden spur & distinguished consultant in both laws, Lord Peter Tomasius of Ravenna, the bearer of these our letters. Who, besides other gifts of body and soul, so shines in every kind of learning and with a most tenacious memory, that he seems to have not only no superior but not even an equal in these things. Which indeed he himself has lately most amply proven, so that not only we, but also this whole city of ours, can bear witness. From which fact it has come about that, having embraced him with singular admiration and exceptional charity, we have decided to have him among our own retainers and household members, beyond others. Wherefore, we pray and beseech from the soul the most Serene kings, illustrious princes, excellent republics, and any other lords, fathers, brothers, friends, and well-wishers of ours, that as often as it may happen to him, they permit the said Lord Peter, so well-deserving, with his servants and horses up to the number of eight, with his bags, coffers, and chests, with his cloths and clothes, his books, silver vessels, and any other things of his, and his arms, to pass through their cities, towns, villages, passes, waters, and places, by day and night, most freely and most expeditiously, without the payment of any duty, tax, or any other burden, for the sake of our love and especially for the cause of such great virtues of this man; and holding him always most commended, they may wish to provide for him a most free and most expeditious passage and a suitable escort, as there may be need and as he himself may request. Which indeed will always be most pleasant and most gratifying to us, who are most ready for all the good pleasures of those who will have so conducted themselves toward him. And we command all and singular magistrates of any of our places, and especially the guardians of the passes and our other subjects, that they inviolably observe and cause to be observed all and singular the aforesaid things in our lands and places. Under penalty of incurring our indignation and any other graver penalty to be imposed on them at our discretion. For the strength and faith of which we have ordered these our patent letters to be made and registered and to be fortified by the protection of our greater seal. Given at Ferrara in our ducal palace in the year of the Lord's nativity one thousand four hundred and ninety-one, the ninth indiction, on the tenth day of the month of October, etc. *Severius*

**Bonifacius, Marquis of Montferrat, etc.** It is most fitting for Princes not to be silent about the commendations of those whom they know to be not only bound and attached to them by faith

and devotion, but whose virtue and knowledge and morals are everywhere manifest and render them pleasing and acceptable to them. And so, paying attention to the distinguished virtues, skill in the sciences, and great memory, as we ourselves have seen and wonderfully experienced, of the respectable and excellent Doctor of both Laws and Caesarean soldier, Lord Peter de Tomasius of Ravenna, who publicly teaches Canon Law at Padua, and also his immense and cordial devotion and singular affection toward us, we are deservedly induced to love him with our heart and to count him among our dear ones. Wherefore, to all and singular most serene lords, kings, most illustrious princes, fathers, renowned dominions, magnificent captains, exalted communities, strenuous commanders, nobles, and officials, our friends and well-wishers, to whom the aforementioned Lord Peter may turn, we affectionately commend him, asking them that they freely and expeditiously permit him to pass through, with five horses and as many persons, and his bags, valises, clothes, books, money, things, and goods, through all cities, lands, and towns, castles, fortresses, districts and jurisdictions, and ports, bridges, and passes, going and returning, by land and water, by day and night, once and many times, without the payment of any duty, toll, tax, bullet, *strapassus*, custom, groundage, ship-fee, or any other exaction of a burden. And that they provide him with guides, escorts, safe conducts, faithful companies, and other opportune favors which he may see fit to request; and that they receive him kindly, welcome him humanely, and treat him graciously, in contemplation of us and in consideration of his own most distinguished virtues. For whatever of humane reception, kind treatment, and propitious favor shall have been conferred upon him, we shall ascribe to our singular pleasure. In faith of which we have ordered our present letters to be made and registered and to be fortified by the impression of our seal. Given at Pontestura on the 23rd day of September, 1487. *Antonius*

**The Priors and Gonfaloniere of Justice of the people and commune of the city of Pistoia, to the most outstanding Doctor of both Laws and most illustrious knight, Lord Peter de Tomasiis of Ravenna, our most beloved, greeting.** If we will either consider or inquire rightly into all things which can be conceived by human minds and discerned by probable reason, nothing, indeed, among the fleeting riches, the various splendors of men, and alternating fortune will be found more admirable than virtue, after immortal God himself who created and rules all things. For this, among good and clear-minded men, is of such worth that it is not only judged a participant in divinity itself, but also for those possessing it, it is a stable and incorrupt possession of human and celestial life. Since, therefore, our Pistoian people have for a long time accurately perceived your singular knowledge, admirable memory, and the remarkable integrity of your civil morals, moved first by the excellence of your virtues, then by the sign of love which you have shown toward our republic both in words and in deeds, they have finally thought of and proposed those things which would declare their equal benevolence toward you. Therefore, having convoked the public council of the people itself according to the custom and laws of the city, and having legitimately celebrated it on the sixth day of the present month, not without the highest and most favorable consent of those convoked, it was decreed to you and your descendants the benefit of our citizenship, with the full faculty of obtaining any offices of the city, and with the exemption and immunity for the next thirty years from any payments which might hereafter be imposed in any way in our same city. And so, in the future, may you be our Pistoian citizen and be held and reputed as a Pistoian citizen as is aforesaid. You, most

outstanding man, to whom both honor and benevolence are deservedly owed, and whose desire we think has been satisfied, accept this sign of our love with a grateful and joyful heart, and be mindful that this our republic has been made common to you as to our other fellow citizens. Given at Pistoia in the palace of our usual residence, under our customary seal, on the 12th day of September, 1480. *Antonius Joannes, Chancellor, etc.*

**To Lancellottus Decius, Doctor of Both Laws.** Health to you, best brother. It was not right that my brother-in-law, coming to Padua, should come to you empty without my letters, by which, although I have nothing else to write, I at least have this which is most often placed at the beginning of epistles: if you are well, I rejoice; I am well. My wife and I, safe, bid you to be safe together with yours. But you, since you are the most memorable of all our age, be mindful of your word to your servant, in which you gave me hope. At Pavia, on the fifth of the Ides of November, 1488. *Your Lancellottus Decius, Doctor of Both Laws.*

**To Lord Peter, Master of Memory, at Padua.**

Why now should we sing of pyramids, why of Babylon? Why of the proud temples of Jupiter and the goddess of the crossroads? We shall no more wonder at the immense amphitheater, For wealth could always make these things in the highest degree. Let Scipio no longer boast of what use had accomplished, He who calls whole armies by their own names. Let fame sing of Peter, what a noble glory he is to Ravenna, Who can do more than learned Minerva. What great thing have the gods done? It is a marvel to tell, For he retains whatever he has read once. Whatever an orator says in a triple hour, He straightway repeats again from his mouth, with nothing less. Thus I think the fifth of the learned sisters bore him, To whom the pious Muse gave the gift of remembering everything.

*Brother Egidius of Viterbo, Hermit*

**From Cremona**

**Joannes Antonius Plebanus to the eminent Doctor of human and divine Law, Lord Peter of Ravenna, greeting.**

We came under a foreign light to the lofty palaces, Where the ample Curia holds the enrolled fathers. There we first perceived you to esteem Cremona with songs, And to enumerate her praises. And what great celerity of your eloquent tongue there is, With which you have a talent equal, or as if greater. For Regulus yielded to you with his flow of speech, And Tully, flowing like Isaeus in eloquence. Concerning your memory, it is scarce possible to touch upon anything with the mind, Since it surpasses mortal belief. Now indeed a great rumor had preceded you, Yet you yourself were found to be much greater. Let me say this, if it be no injury to anyone: Either you are a god, or you are the first among men in all the world. Hail, therefore, deign to read through my humble little books; The words of a client are accepted by his lord. As the Utopian god rejoices to be asked with a placid voice, And then to grant gifts freely to supplicants, So I ask you, do not deny my precepts to me as I pray, Which may by this art make this head

memorable. If you grant these things, though your fame is the greatest by any measure, It will yet grow by my song and my voice.

### **From Brescia**

**To the most illustrious and most excellent Doctor of Caesarean and Pontifical Law, endowed with a marvelous memory, most splendid knight Peter of Ravenna, Marcus Picardus, greeting.**

Let Simonides yield, and the lofty mind of Themistocles, The renowned Arpinate with Cicero, and Solon. When the doctor, when the famous knight and splendor of Ravenna, Powerful in his memorable mind, sings of the greatest things.

### **From Pavia, a poem of our student Hieronymus Buticella to the university of scholars.**

Nourishing and seemly one, do not spurn a student devoted to study, So Peter prevails here in laws and in foot. Prose will not be lacking for him; thousands of laws will be repeated, Thousands that you would think could never be reported. If you desire canons, a hundred canons will be sung, Nor will the pen be able to write what he reports. And of other writings he will recite splendid things from all of them, So many that you could scarcely believe they were written. Add that he says that the gifts of his virtue He can add to our breasts quickly. But if you now spurn him, nourishing one, you will weep in the future, Hereafter your fate may perhaps be mourned.

### *The Same*

If their age admires Cyrus for remembering his own, Let our age worship Peter as a divinity. Because I have known that few in our age have been endowed with an excellent memory, I have decided to transmit a most beautiful work to Italy and to the whole world, the precepts of which, if anyone is willing to observe, he will wonderfully attain the highest peak of this art in a short time. Nor am I mistaken, dearest reader, for when I tested my precepts throughout all of Italy, all affirmed that they had seen a divine rather than a human work. And some even crossed themselves. Nor did I have a teacher in this artful memory, but with God assisting me, I found these most beautiful rules with the greatest labors. This little book I read to my most learned students, and as I was reading, hanging on the precepts of this art from my mouth, they wrote them down. And those who have used my teaching have obtained both honor and praise. Excellent men have praised this discovery of mine, whose names I have pleased to inscribe at the end of this work, lest I alone should seem to have praised what is mine. Which, indeed, will be judged more beautiful if it has more excellent praisers. Therefore, dearest reader, embrace my precepts, exercise them with all study and diligence. For from them, not from others, you will gather grain, and with your whole effort, believe me indeed, you will carry back the greatest glory. "We are not sufficient to think anything of ourselves," writes the Apostle in 2 Corinthians 3. "Every good gift is from above, descending from the Father of lights," James 1. For "what do you have that you have not received?" 1 Corinthians 4. "Without me you can do nothing," John 15. "Do not glory, nor let boastful speech proceed from your mouth, for God is a God of

knowledge," 1 Kings 2. "I will give you understanding and instruct you in this way in which you shall walk," says the omnipotent God in the book of Psalms through the prophet. And Baldus at the beginning of the book of feuds: "A man cannot will any good thing unless he is helped by Him who cannot will evil," said Augustine to Pope Boniface. "Grace precedes, that we may will the good." Augustine in the *Enchiridion*: "Free will moves to seek salvation, God first moving it." Augustine, *On Ecclesiastical Dogmas*: "Without the grace of God, men do absolutely no good, whether in willing or in acting." Augustine, *On Correction and Grace*: "Even to will what is good, I am not able unless you will it." Augustine in the *Soliloquies*. And the ingenious poet writes at the beginning of his distinguished work: "Gods, inspire my undertakings, for you have changed them also." And elsewhere: "Be present, and assist my undertaking, lofty Jupiter." And Caesar speaks beautifully in the law *In nomine Domini*, C. *de officio praefecti praetorio Africae*; in the law "with God providing us help," C. *de episcopis et clericis*; and in the law "with God as author, governing our empire," C. *de veteri iure enucleando*. And the text is in the chapter *in nomine Domini*, 23 di.; and in the chapter *in nomine Domini, de testibus*; and in the chapter *veritatis, de dolo et contumacia*; and in the chapter *non licet*, 26 q. 5; and in the chapter *in nomine Patris*, 73 di.; in the authentic *ut praeponatur nomen Imperatoris*, in the authentic *mox inchoetur auctore Deo*, in the authentic *de armis* at the beginning; in the authentic *de quaestore*; in the first chapter *de baptismo*; the gloss on the rubric of the Institutes; Baldus on the rubric C. *de iure iurando*. Referring, therefore, my mind to the providence of the omnipotent God, I have arranged to order this most useful work, in which I will have satisfied my friends if I have avoided obscurities of words and sentences, so that even the unlearned may be able to derive some utility from this little book. In the tradition of these precepts, therefore, I have thought to speak, not to argue. So that the matter may be had more clearly, I will adduce the easiest conclusions in the whole art, and since I am a legist, I seem to imitate the legists.

The FIRST Conclusion will be: This art consists of places and images. Places are like paper or other material on which we write. Images are the likenesses of the things which we wish to commend to memory. Therefore, I will first prepare the paper on which we can place the images. And for the foundation of this first conclusion, I set down four rules. The first is this: places are windows placed in walls, columns, corners, and things that are similar to these. Let the second rule be: the places ought not to be too near or too distant. For nearness, as I have experienced, confuses the natural memory in the apposition of things. But if the places were too distant, we recite what has been handed to the places with delay. Therefore, they will be moderately distant if one is distant from another by five or six feet. Let the third rule be: vain, as it seems to me, is the opinion of those who say that places ought not to be made where there is a frequency of people, as in churches or in squares. For it is sufficient to have seen the church when it is empty; for the walking about of people has not always been seen there, and in this, experience, which is the mistress of things, has taught the contrary. Let the fourth rule be: the places should not be high, because I have always judged it useful that men, wishing to place images, can touch the places. I take, therefore, a church very well known to me, whose parts I consider diligently, walking about in it three or four times. I depart and return home, and there I revolve in my mind what I have seen by myself. And in this manner I give a beginning to the places: on the right side of the door from which one goes by a straight path to the high altar, I establish my first place. Then in the wall after five or six feet, a second. And if something real is

placed there, such as a column, a window, or something similar, I put a place there. But if a real thing is lacking, I fashion an imaginary one at my own discretion. If, however, in making these places one wishes to omit this, fearing that he may forget the thing placed there, let it be granted, provided that he is mindful of having established a place there. And so let him proceed from place to place until, making places, he returns to the same door. And let these things be done in the first walls of the church, omitting all that is in the middle of it. And if one desires to have an abundance of places, let him enter a monastery in this order and fill that whole place with locations, or let him procure places for himself in the walls outside the church. And he who wishes to remember many things ought to procure many places for himself. But I, because I wished to surpass all the men of Italy in the abundance of things without the turning of pages, in sacred scriptures, canon and civil law, and in the authorities of many other things, while I was a young man, I prepared for myself one hundred thousand places, and now I have added to them ten thousand, in which I have placed the things to be said by me, so that they may be at hand when I wish to test the powers of my memory. And when I leave my homeland, so that as a pilgrim I may see the cities of Italy, I can say, "I carry all my things with me." Nor do I cease, however, to make places. I advise this, that places be had in some church and monastery solely for depositing the things which it is convenient to recite daily, such as arguments, reasonings, histories, fables, and the sermons which are given in Lent. And let this office be deputed to those places only. And one thing which will be judged useful for these places I have arranged to write at the end. I indeed wish to teach most perfectly the youths who are desirous of this art. But let the places so established be repeated from memory three or four times a month, for the repetition of places cannot be bought at any price. The SECOND Conclusion will be, now that the paper is had, I shall teach the method of writing on it. In a great crown of nobles, while I was a young man, it was once proposed to me that I should recite some names of men to be said by one of those present. I did not refuse. Therefore, the names were said. In the first place, I put a friend having that name; in the second, similarly; and so however many were said, so many I placed. And having placed them, I recited them. And let the one placing them take note that he always puts a friend doing that which is commonly accustomed to be done by him. And this conclusion proceeds clearly in known names. But if a friend having that name is not known, such as Bozrab, Zorobabel, then you will place what will be said in its own place. And I say the same for the names of animals, such as horse, ox, ass, so that in the first place a horse is put, in the second an ox, in the third an ass. And the same for things lacking a soul, such as a book, a cloak, a garment. But take care lest you be deceived. If in the first place a book were put, in the second a cloak, so simply placed you could fail while reciting. For it is the office of this art to exercise the natural memory. But these things cannot move it, because the gesture of the image placed excites it, which is not naturally found in such things. Therefore, an image ought to be put in a place such that it moves itself; if it cannot, let it be moved by another. Place such a thing in the hand of some mover, so that from that motion the natural memory may be moved. But a youth of most acute genius will say, "These precepts are not perfect in every part. An ant placed in a place moves itself, yet on account of its smallness it will not move the memory. A grain of pepper placed in the hand of a mover will also not excite it." I confess this, if a single ant is placed. But I will place a multitude of ants ascending and descending a tree in the place. What, therefore, a single ant cannot do, a multitude will do. And a friend will also move many grains in a place. The ingenious youth will also insist: "A flea jumps, nor does it move the memory. But a

multitude cannot be well placed." But for a flea, I will place a friend catching a flea. And I very often for a flea have placed the most excellent physician of all our age, Master Gherard of Verona, whom I once saw catching a flea.

The THIRD is the golden Conclusion, because for the letters of the alphabet I have people, and thus living images. For the letter A, I have Antonius; for the letter B, Benedictus; and so on, persons in whose names the first letter is that which I wish to place. And I commonly place most beautiful girls for the letters. For they greatly excite my memory. And most frequently in my places I have placed Juniper of Pistoia, most dear to me when I was a youth. And believe me, if I shall have placed most beautiful girls for the images, I recite more easily and more beautifully what I have entrusted to the places. Therefore, have this most useful secret in artificial memory, which I have long kept silent out of modesty. If you wish to remember quickly, place most beautiful virgins. For memory is wonderfully moved by the placing of girls, and he who has seen has borne witness. But this useful precept will not be able to profit those who hate and contemn women, but these will attain the fruit of this art with more difficulty. Yet most religious and most chaste men will give me pardon, for I ought not to have been silent about the precept which has brought me honor and praise in this art, since I will strive with all my strength to leave behind most excellent successors. The FOURTH Conclusion is that the images of the alphabet, or the names demonstrating the letters, be held well in memory and often repeated. I begin thus: if it happens to me to place this conjunction, "&" (et), in a place, I place Eusebius and Thomas. In this order, however: that Eusebius touches the place and Thomas stands before him. But if Thomas were to hold the place of Eusebius and Eusebius that of Thomas, it is not the conjunction "et," but this pronoun, "te," that we will see placed in the place. For in this art there is this rule: that what is first in order should be closer to the place. For just as we write "e" first on paper in this conjunction "et," so it is also in a place. And the same is to be observed generally in all words and other things to be placed. The FIFTH Conclusion is on syllables of three letters, in which one proceeds thus. For if a vowel is in the middle, as in this syllable "Bar," then I take the image of the last letter, and I add some thing whose beginning is similar to the two preceding letters. If, therefore, in a place I shall have placed Raimundus striking the place with a staff (*baculo*), the syllable "bar" will be read in the place. And if Simon shall have struck the place, the syllable "bas" will be had. This, therefore, may be the rule, which is repeated thus: where a vowel is in the middle in a syllable of three letters, the image of the last letter is taken, with some thing placed, mobile or moving itself, whose beginning is similar to the two preceding letters. But if the vowel is at the end, as in the syllable "bra," then I place the image of the first letter in the place, and a mobile thing or one moving itself, whose beginning is similar to the two following. If, therefore, I shall have placed Benedictus with turnips (*rapis*) or frogs (*ranis*) in the place, it will give the syllable "bra." But if Thomas, the syllable "tra." Therefore, an abundance of things beginning as syllables, if it be had at hand, will bring great utility. But if a vowel is at the beginning, making a syllable, as in this word "amo," then the image of the first letter is always to be placed in the place, and a thing having a beginning similar to the following syllable. If, therefore, Antonius turns a millstone (*molam*), we will read this word "amo" placed. If Eusebius, the word "emo." It is to be known, however, that we cannot conveniently place a word of three or four syllables. But there is no need, because what can be done by fewer is done in vain by more. For it is sufficient to have placed the first and second syllable. A word of two syllables,

however, we can place whole. For example, "pater" (father): I will place in the location a thing or a man for the image of the syllable "pa," such as Paul. And for the syllable "ter," since the vowel is in the middle, I will take Raimundus having a cloth (*telam*) in his hand. I conclude, therefore, thus: the images of the alphabet, beautifully taken together, and an abundance of things beginning as syllables, will always serve us if other images are lacking. For if I can have others, I omit these, about which will be said in other conclusions. The SIXTH conclusion is on these words: bread, wine, wood, garment, and similar ones, and on the names of dignities, such as Pope, Emperor, abbot, canon, all of which even rustics understand what they demonstrate, or to speak more clearly, they are uniform in the vernacular and Latin tongue. In such words, I do not seek other images, but I place that which the word itself sounds. And all the syllables of such words can be easily placed by a beautiful invention. For in the human body I have found the images of the cases. For the head is the nominative case; the right hand, the genitive; the left hand, the dative; the right foot, the accusative; the left foot, the vocative; and the belly or chest, the ablative case. And for the singular number, I place either a beautiful naked girl, and for the plural number, the same one elegantly adorned, or him whom I wish to remember. I wish, therefore, either to place a thing or a man. If a thing, like "bread" (*panem*, accusative), I will place a naked girl in the place, touching her right foot with bread. But if I wish to place a word demonstrating a man established in some office or dignity, such as "abbot" (*abbatem*, accusative), I place one abbot in the place, naked, who strikes the place with his right foot. And if, O sweetest reader, you consider diligently, this invention will seem beautiful to you. And thus I am accustomed to place these words whole. The SEVENTH Conclusion is that we can also place words by the sound of the voice, by the gesture of the body, and by likeness, and I use these images most frequently. For I place a friend for a word. I knew one doctor who always had on his lips the law *Per hanc, C. de temporibus appellationum*. For that law alone, of all laws, the doctor said from memory. Wishing, therefore, to place that law, I place that doctor, who always excites laughter. And thus I make a placement by the sound of the voice. By the gesture of the body, images are placed when a gesture is comprehended in the word. For the verb "I despoil" (*spolio*), I place a friend who despoils another. For the verb "I seize" (*rapio*), a friend seizing something by force. By likeness, I place images when I find a thing similar to the word in letters, although dissimilar in meaning, as when for the verb "I sing" (*cano*), I place a dog (*canem*). The EIGHTH Conclusion is for the lords learned in the law, and I will begin to speak of the volumes of civil law, and when I wish to commit them to places, I take the colors with which they are covered. For the *Digestum Vetus*, a white skin; for the *Digestum Novum*, a red skin; for the *Infortiatum*, a black skin; for the *Codex*, a green skin; for the *Volumen*, a skin of various colors; for the *Institutions*, a small book. And for the *Authenticum*, I place a notary having a large instrument. For an authenticum, a girl having a privilege. For the book of feuds, a count of some castle. For the *Decretum*, however, since in it are the authorities of the holy fathers, I place some old man writing in the place. For the *Decretals*, I place the Pope sitting on a throne. For the *Clementines*, a girl whose name is Clementia. For the sixth book, that instrument so called in Italy about which Ovid writes: "One part would stand, the other part would draw the circle." For the commentators of the law, those who have the same name. But the image of the gloss I take from the teaching given by me in the first place in the placement of words. For the *Digestum*, I have Juniper giving a cithara to a Florentine, so that he can sing the deeds of Orlando. But the citations of the *Decretum* are placed thus: for a citation which is made by

distinctions, a girl is placed who tears bread or paper. But for a question, I place Juniper striking a servant-girl. For consecration, there is a priest consecrating the host. For penance, there is Juniper who confesses her light sins to me. The NINTH Conclusion is to show how we ought to commit the rubrics of both Laws to places. And I am accustomed to place two images commonly for them. For if I shall have wished to remember the Rubric *de transactionibus* (on settlements), I place Thomas having frogs (*ranas*), or I place a gesture of the body. For I imagine two who have litigated for a long time to have ceased from the lawsuit, and one to offer the other a sign of peace. This is a most beautiful image of the rubric *de transactionibus*. But the beginnings of laws or chapters are put in places by the alphabet, or by the sound of the voice, or by likeness, or by the gesture of the body, about which has already been fully spoken. The TENTH Conclusion is on placing arguments, for which I am accustomed to place two images. The first is a gesture of the body. As if it is said thus: "A testament made without seven witnesses is not valid," I imagine a testator to have made a testament before two witnesses, and one virgin to tear it up. The second is an image because I place two or three of the more principal words of the argument. You, jurist, have an example, and the philosophers will understand me: "When in an act the command of someone is required, that ought to precede." Here are many words, but it is sufficient to place "command" and "precede," and we will be able to say the remaining parts of the argument from memory. Therefore, from the placement of two or three words, we will recite the rest elegantly. And believe this experienced master. The ELEVENTH Conclusion, since a certain person asked, "Whether one ought to place several things in the same place?" I answered: If I wish to put in places things which are proposed to me by another, so that I ought to recite them immediately as proposed, I place images of one thing only in a place. But if I arrange to put in places things which I read in books, so that I can pronounce them from memory, then I have not hesitated to place images of several things in one place very often. The TWELFTH will be a most beautiful Conclusion: to reveal by what method images of numbers ought to be made. And for all the numbers which we can think of, I have found only twenty images. Those, therefore, I will describe specifically. For the number ten, I have a large golden or silver cross. For twenty, the likeness of the letter 'r', of iron or wood, joined to some round thing, because we write the number twenty on paper in this manner: 20. For thirty, the likeness of that figure in the same way joined to a round thing. And so up to the number one hundred, I have images, which are ten. I also have nine images of numbers, beginning from one up to the number nine, which I have fabricated on the fingers of a man's hands. There is, therefore, the first finger of the right hand for me for the first number, or for one. The second for the second, or for two. And so I proceed up to the fourth finger of the left hand. But so that these may be held more easily in memory, I say the first finger of the right hand is of the Guelphs; the second, of the Ghibellines; the third, of the Jews; the fourth, of rings; the fifth, of ears. And so let it be said of the fingers of the left hand. I call the first of the Guelphs because the Guelphs are said to hold that one in great esteem. The second, of the Ghibellines. I call the third of the Jews because we show that finger to the Jews, and they look back with a fierce gaze.

He who desires to know the cause, let him seek and he will find it. But why I name the fourth and fifth thus is very well known. But for the number one thousand, I have Michael. If, therefore, any number is proposed to me, I will find its image most easily. I will put some examples, by

which having been put, even a reader of rude genius will understand this conclusion excellently. If I shall have wished to say 11, q. 3, I will imagine in a place a Guelph holding a cross in his right hand, and a Jew who with all his strength tries to seize it by force with his right hand. If I shall have wished to place 2 Corinthians 4, I will imagine in a place a Ghibelline who holds a curtain in his right hand, which he shows to a beautiful girl, and she receives it with her right hand. For a betrothed girl I place for the fourth digit, and so for the fourth and ninth number. If I shall have wished to remember the fourth distinction of penances, I will place a priest, old not young, to whom Juniper will confess her sins. And she will do a marvelous thing: for she will absolve the priest, placing her right hand on his head. And so, lest the process be infinite, let this be the end of this most beautiful artful memory, in whose precepts all things, if not explicitly, are at least implicitly comprehended. One thing, however, I will not omit, which I promised to write in this place. I judge it useful to be in the places which we have fabricated for depositing heard things. If in the fifth place a golden hand is placed, in the tenth a golden cross, in the fifteenth a silver hand, in the twentieth the image of that number itself, and so my teaching advises to do in the rest. I have had most excellent students in the artful memory, O sweetest reader, and they have extolled my teaching with wonderful praises, some of whom, as I think, it will please you to read here. My disciples were Master Antonius Trombeta of the Minorite order, a most celebrated theologian; Master Peter Rochabonella; Master Joannes de Agla; Master Nicoletus Teatinus; Master Hieronymus Veronensis; Master Hieronymus de Polchastris, most consummate doctors of arts and medicine and lecturers at Padua. The respectable Severius and Nicolaus, secretaries of the most illustrious Duke of Ferrara; Lord Joannes Maria Riminaldus; Lord Dominicus de Massa; Lord Antonius de Liutis; Lord Joannes Franciscus de Canali; and Lord Leonellus de Bruturis, most consummate jurists and lecturers at Ferrara. I will be silent about the Venetian nobles who, having heard me, learned to pronounce many things from memory. Yet I cannot wrap in silence Dominicus Georgius, an illustrious man, who by my teaching, as he himself affirmed, acquired for himself immortal glory. I have lectured at Bologna, Pavia, and Ferrara, and those who heard me began to know many things from memory. And although my artful memory is proven by the authorities of others, yet I do not think I sin if my deeds are read in this booklet, which will wonderfully approve it. While I was a student of law and had not yet seen my twentieth year, in the university of Padua, I said that I could recite the whole Code of Civil Law. For I asked that some laws be proposed to me at the choice of those present. Which having been proposed, I would say the summaries of Bartolus, I would recite some words of the text, I would adduce the case, I would examine the points touched upon by the doctors, I would say "this law has so many glosses," and I would recall upon what words they were placed.

I would allege contraries and solve them. It seemed to those present to have seen a miracle. Alexander Imolensis was stupefied for a long time. Nor do I tell a fable. I spoke openly in the university of Padua. And since "in the mouth of two or three every word stands," I have three witnesses of this matter: the Magnificent Lord Joannes Franciscus Pasqualicus, a Venetian senator and most excellent doctor of both laws, now legate with the most illustrious Duke of Milan; and the most illustrious doctor Lord Sigismundus de Capitibus listae, a noble citizen of Padua, whose brother Franciscus was a jurist of most acute genius; and the respectable Lord Monaldinus de Monaldinis, residing in Venice, in whom virtue has placed its dwelling. I also held

in memory the most copious lectures of Alexander Imolensis, lecturing at Padua, and I would reduce them from word to word into writing. Those also, after he had finished, in the presence of a great copy of students, beginning from the end, I would recite. And from his own lectures, while I was hearing them in the schools, I would make poems, and all the parts of them placed in the poems I would immediately replicate. And those who saw this were stupefied. Of this matter I have as witnesses the most illustrious knight and doctor Lord Joannes Franciscus de Milliis of Brescia; the respectable doctor Lord Sigismundus de Capitibus listae; and the son of Alexander Imolensis, who is now a most celebrated jurist. One hundred and thirty-five authorities of the most religious friar Michael of Milan, preaching at Padua, proving the immortality of the soul, I pronounced from memory and in order before him. Who embraced me, saying, "Live long, singular gem! Oh, that I might see you dedicated to religion!" The whole city of Padua is a witness, but I have as witnesses the magnificent Lord Joannes Franciscus Pasicus and Lord Sigismundus de Capitibus listae and Lord Monaldinus de Monaldinis. I, having been created a doctor, asked in the university of Padua that some student from the university should present to me, sitting in the chair, one of the three volumes of the Digests which he should choose, and should designate the place where I ought to read. For I said that upon the proposition I will allege innumerable laws. Witnesses are the most illustrious doctor of both laws, Lord Gaspar Orsatus, reading Canon Laws at Padua, and the most learned Lord Prosper of Cremona, residing at Padua. All the sermons which Master Antonius the Hermit had pronounced at Padua in one Lent, in that order in which he himself had said them, I pronounced from memory and gave to him in writing. Having seen which, he said that he would no longer preach at Padua. And of this matter, if he lives, he himself is a witness beyond all exception. The sermons also of Lord Matthew of Verona, a canon regular and a most eloquent man, which he had delivered for almost a whole Lent, I gave to him in writing, since I held them in memory and was putting them down on paper. He himself is a witness, and Lord Deodatus of Vicenza, a canon regular. While I was lecturing at Pistoia, having been hired by the Florentine lords, I recited the sermon on the word of God of friar Blasius of Piombino, a hermit. Witnesses are Paulus, son of master Michael, and Dominicus, the chancellor, Pistoian citizens. And that whole city will be able to testify about my artful memory, which has decorated me with immunities and privileges. Dominicus Georgius, an illustrious man, prefect of Padua and a disciple in the artful memory, while he was once reading ducal letters, I carefully placed the words and immediately recited them. Witness is Lord Anibal de Magiis of Bassiano, a noble citizen of Padua, whose father Nicolaus was a most excellent jurist. Once I was playing chess, and another was throwing dice, and another was writing down all the throws, and from a theme proposed to me I was dictating two epistles. After we put an end to the game, I repeated all the moves of the chess and the dice, and the words of the epistles, beginning from the last. These four things were placed by me at the same time. Witnesses are Lord Peter de Montagnano and Franciscus Nevolinus, noble Paduan citizens. While I was at Piacenza, I entered the monastery of the black monks to see it, and in its dormitory, accompanied by a certain monk, walking about twice, I placed the names of the monks which were on the doors of the cells. Then, having gathered them together, I greeted each one by his proper name, although I could not have pointed out with my finger whom I was naming. The monks were marveling by what means I, a pilgrim, could utter their names from memory. As they did not cease to marvel, I said at last, "My artful memory was able to do this." One of whom said, "Therefore Peter of Ravenna could do this,

and no other." In the general chapter of the canons regular at Padua, I recited the sermon of Lord Deodatus of Vicenza in the order in which he had pronounced it, with the author of the sermon himself standing by. Once Cassandra Fidelis, a most excellent Venetian virgin, drew me to the contemplation of her. While she was reading letters sent to her by the most serene consort of King Ferdinand, I placed them and recited them. Witness is that most learned virgin, Lord Paulus Ramusius, an excellent doctor of Rimini, and Angelus Salernitanus, a famous man.

Someone was writing a privilege for the most illustrious Duchess Eleonora; another was reading. I was present and committed it from word to word to places, and beginning from the last word, I recited the whole.

While those present marveled. Of this matter, the witness is Lord Joannes de Bruturiis, a most illustrious citizen of Ferrara, who can also narrate many things about this artful memory. But what the nephew of the great pontiff Paul, the Reverend Canon of Padua and distinguished doctor of decrees, Lord Augustinus Barbus, can report about my deeds, I omit, since he is a most dear godfather. But what more? Brescia is a witness, Pavia, and Cremona. What my artful memory was able to do, the poems which are read at the beginning of this booklet declare. The most illustrious Marquis Bonifacius is a witness, and his most beautiful wife, who gifted me with an outstanding present. Bologna is a witness most recently. The most illustrious Hercules the Duke is a witness, and the most illustrious wife Eleonora. The whole of Ferrara is a witness. For I recited two sermons of the most celebrated preacher of the word of God, master Marianus the hermit. Having heard which, the said master was stupefied and said, "Most illustrious Duchess, this is a divine and miraculous work." The University of Padua is a witness. For I read all my lectures on Canon Law daily without a book, as if I had the book before my eyes. I pronounce the text and the glosses from memory, so that I do not seem to omit even the smallest syllable. But I have decided to write here what I have placed in my locations. And what I have committed to places, I hold forever. In the nineteen letters of the alphabet, I have placed twenty thousand citations of both laws. And in the same order, seven thousand of the sacred books. One thousand verses of Ovid, which contain what was wisely said by him. Two hundred authorities of Cicero. Three hundred sayings of the philosophers. A great part of Valerius Maximus. The natures of almost all bipedal and quadrupedal animals. The individual words of which authorities I have placed. And when I desire to test the powers of my artful memory, I ask that one of those letters of the alphabet be proposed to me. Upon which proposal, I bring forth citations. And so that I may be clearly understood, have an example. The letter 'A' is now proposed to me in a great assembly of learned men, and immediately, making a beginning from the law, I will bring forth a thousand citations and more, from titles on alienation, on absence, on arbitrators, on appeals, and on similar things which are had in our law beginning with the said letter 'A'. Then in sacred scripture, on the Antichrist, on adulation, and I will pronounce many citations of sacred scripture beginning with that letter. I will omit the verses of Ovid, the authorities of Cicero and Valerius. On the Ass, on the Eagle, on the Lamb, on the Hawk, on the Boar, on the Ram, I will allege authorities. And whatever I shall have said, beginning from the last, I will quickly repeat. And I think this demonstration of memory to be most beautiful, to which I have bound myself always and forever. Let the most reverend now acting as vice-gerent in Bologna be asked, with the most consummate jurist Lord Joannes de Sala, what I alleged upon the letter 'M' proposed to me. Let the university of Bologna be asked what I pronounced upon the letter 'P', on the

power of God and the power of the Pope. And this mode of lecturing, from the multitude of things, I call Chaos. When it shall please the best and greatest God, I will give this great work to Italy and to the whole world. These things also in canon law only I have committed to places: three thousand citations of the Decretum, two thousand of the Decretals, the whole Sixth book and its thousand glosses, the Clementines and their thousand glosses. And when I speak of the glosses of the Decretals, the Sixth, and the Clementines, I bring forth the words in which they are placed. I have also committed to memory a thousand singularly said things in civil law. Nor is a fable narrated. For in these things I daily make trial. I wished to carry all my things with me. Yet I desire greater things. From these I learn. For natural desires are insatiable, as Seneca says to Lucilius. I do not omit also the illustrious prince Marcus de Piis, who, hearing me, was stupefied. And because of this, he very often names me in my absence. Lord Bartholomeus Pigafetus of Vicenza, a man indeed most wise, dares to say: "I knew Lord Thomas of Rieti, who was formerly the most memorable of his age, and I was joined to him in great friendship. But I judge you to be superior."

This is the book which will now offer light to the blind; By my precepts, they will be able to say many things. These ages will give you innumerable Cyruses, And the great glory of so great a man will fall away. Yet we pray that you, as one who gives the precepts of Peter, Be mindful and say: "Peter, you were the master."

Day 3 of January, 1491.

Appearing in the presence of the most Serene Prince and most illustrious Lordship, the distinguished Jurist Lord Peter of Ravenna, called 'A Memoria', who reads Canon Law in the University of Padua, reverently set forth that for the whole time of his life, with many vigils and labors, he has sweated to acquire the art of memory, which, with the best and greatest God helping, he has acquired. That he has composed in that same art a certain little work called *Phoenix*. Which, since he has decided at present to publish for the universal convenience and benefit, he has humbly supplicated that a way be given lest others collect the fruits of his labors and vigils. Assenting to which equitable and fitting petition, the undersigned Lord Councilors, with the College so advising, terminating, have decreed, do decree, and command that no one should dare in this city of Venice and in the whole dominion of our most illustrious Lordship to print, or having been printed, to sell the volumes of the said work named *Phoenix*, under penalty of losing them and in addition twenty-five pounds for each volume. And let those be subject to this same penalty who should presume to sell books of this kind printed elsewhere in the dominion of the aforesaid most illustrious Lordship. Excepted only that printer whom the aforesaid doctor shall have pre-selected.

*The most Serene Prince in College.*

Dominicus Maurocenus, Councilor Nicolaus Leono, Councilor Thomas Mocenigo, Councilor Marcus Fusculo, Councilor Nicolaus Trivisanus, Councilor Leonardus Lauredanus, Councilor

*Georgius Nigro, Ducal Secretary.*

**A decastich of C. Licinius to the Candid Reader.**

If you attempt to make yourself memorable, Candid reader, And to have a name among  
celebrated men, Read through what the great specimen of ancient Ravenna Has published, and  
praise it to the heavens. And you can and ought deservedly to esteem him a master Of an artful  
genius, and his judgment at the same time. Come then, let all of us venerate this divinity  
forever, And let each poet sing his deserved praises. Greece has not seen his like, nor has the  
land of Romulus, Nor will posterity have one. Farewell.

*Bernardinus de Choris of Cremona, the chosen printer, printed this in Venice on the 10th day of  
January, 1491.*