

We're not giving away a new car or an all-expenses-paid month in Europe

We hope you'll support us anyway.

by [Peter W. Marty](#) in the [September 23, 2020](#) issue

KIMBALL GRAND PIANO
The KIMBALL needs no introduction. Opera singers and musicians over are singing to you every day.

A TRIP TO EUROPE
\$1000
The trip to Europe will be conducted under the auspices of the H. W. Dunning Company of Boston, whose thirty years experience in guiding travelers to all parts of the world insures the winner of this prize the most complete, comfortable and intelligently arranged tour that \$1,000 can provide.

TWO SEDAN AUTOMOBILES
Do you prefer a Dodge, Gray, Essex, Chrysler Four, Overland, Chevrolet, Durant, Ajax, Jewett, Studebaker?
\$1000—Two Prizes—\$1000
The car of your choice is the prize. The winner of this contest will receive a new sedan automobile of his own choice. The car is to be a four-door sedan, with a top, and must be a new model for the year 1925. The car is to be a sedan, with a top, and must be a new model for the year 1925. The car is to be a sedan, with a top, and must be a new model for the year 1925.

CORONA TYPEWRITER
The Corona Four has the state prize for each state. It is the lightest, most compact, and most popular for travel. This new model for the year 1925, with its new, and holds up to a year, should attract students and scholars.

THE CHRISTIAN CENTURY
Presents a Feature Announcement
Giving Specifications and Details of
FREE PRIZE LIST
in connection with its great
CONTINENTAL CAMPAIGN
to DOUBLE its list of subscribers

Major Prizes
\$1,000 A Year's Tuition at any University or College, with \$300 cash added.
\$2,000 A Year's Tuition at any University or College, with \$300 cash added.
\$1,000 A Year's Tuition at any University or College, with \$300 cash added.
\$1,000 A Year's Tuition at any University or College, with \$300 cash added.

Primary Prizes
To any and every subscriber who sends in a subscription card.
To any and every subscriber who sends in a subscription card.
To any and every subscriber who sends in a subscription card.
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Good Game and a Merry One
The game of chance is a game of chance. The game of chance is a game of chance. The game of chance is a game of chance. The game of chance is a game of chance.

I don't know any magazine that would complain of having too many subscribers. That would be akin to a book publisher griping about too many book sales, or a celebrity Twitter user longing for fewer followers. But this insatiable quest for more took on a curious twist during an early chapter of this magazine's history. By today's standards, the *Century*'s effort to add new subscribers through a special campaign in 1925 looks like a mix of desperation and questionable financial judgment.

In what they called a "Continental Campaign," the *Century* staff sought to double the magazine's subscription base by enlisting current subscribers to compete with one another in attracting new subscribers. The most successful ambassadors were eligible for an elaborate set of prizes. Grand prize options included a two-month, all-expenses-paid trip to Europe, a brand new automobile, and a year's tuition at any college or university plus \$300 extra cash.

The *Century* has never been an affluent organization. We publish fanatically but live modestly. My desk is the same nondescript wooden one used by the magazine's editor in the 1940s. What possessed that small *Century* staff to bet on lavish returns

from their outsized prizes isn't at all clear. But when the expenses doled out for the awards totaled more than \$8,500, and the number of new \$4 subscriptions barely exceeded 2,000, the staff was done messing around with Lotto-like speculation.

Today, we're far wiser. Sharp financial practices drive this nonprofit publishing venture. We stretch every dollar entrusted to us and avoid gimmickry altogether. Our entire mission is focused on delivering intellectually stimulating writing designed to shape the moral sensibilities and religious perspectives of our readers. We aim to inspire passionate and critical thinking in every life of faith.

But we cannot do any of this without your support—and by support I mean more than your subscription payment. We depend on financial donations for more than 25 percent of our operation.

Only you know what the value of our pages is to you personally. Size that up and then respond with grace in the envelope provided. Please don't assume others will carry the load for what you value. I can assure you we won't be sending a Kimball grand piano your way in gratitude for what you give. But I can promise that we'll keep filling your mind and heart with the best writing and insight we have to offer. Thanks for your generosity!

A version of this article appears in the print edition under the title "Gifts without prizes."