

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 music-lovers are sure to love 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 assures the winner of this prize the most complete, comfortable and intelligently arranged tour that \$1,000 can provide.

ORONA TYPEWRITER
The Corona Four has state price for each state light weight that of very popular to travel. This new model has the reputation of being the most reliable and holds up to a year should correct students and business.

TWO SEDAN AUTOMOBILES
Do you prefer a Dodge, Gray, Essex, Chrysler Four, Overland, Chevrolet, Durant, Ajax, Jewett, Studebaker?

\$1000—Two Prizes—\$1000

The Winner Chooses His Own Make of Car
Any automobile costing not more than \$1,000 goes to each of two winners. The new winners choose the makes they desire. If either prefers a more expensive car he may have it by paying the amount in \$1,000. There are no conditions. The choice of city is up to you!

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 New Grand Piano
\$1,000	A Kimball Upright Piano
\$1,000	A Standard Sedan
\$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

Minor Prizes

\$50	Books
\$50	Books
\$50	Books
\$50	Books

Primary Prizes

- To any and every subscriber who sends in a subscription—Four choice of his own selection.
- To any and every subscriber who sends in a subscription—Five choice of his own selection.
- To any and every subscriber who sends in a subscription—Ten choice of his own selection.

Good Game and a Merry One
The game is open to all subscribers. The prizes are to be awarded on the date fixed by the committee. The game is open to all subscribers. The prizes are to be awarded on the date fixed by the committee. The game is open to all subscribers. The prizes are to be awarded on the date fixed by the committee.

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."