"Smedley. Smedley. Hm-m . . ."

The name rang a bell somewhere inside my cerebrum. But where or when I had heard it, or had association with that party or parties, was what was eluding me, causing me no little bit of consternation and mental agitation.
"Smedley." Again I repeated the name, trying desperately to recapture visions of former faces and places or former experiences to which I could attach the elusive, brain-troubling name. But nothing stable emerged inside my head -- nothing but the perplexing feeling that sometime or somewhere I had met, lived near, or associated with a Smedley.

Now this in itself should not cause one any great amount of concern of anxiety, I realized; but such was not the case with me. You see, this Smedley was different. And I mean different!

We were in our home room at Laurel High, behaving like most juniors do in home rooms (and seniors too, for that matter, or freshmen and sophomores) when this strikingly-beautiful brunette stepped through the open doorway and said, in what sounded like little more than a faint rippling of a brook, "Pardon me; is this Mr. Brasher's room?" (Suddenly I felt ashamed that I had laughed at Carl Thrush for sticking a piece of masking tape over the name on the door).

Mr. Brasher was out at the time, so, gallant-like and feeling unusually chivalrous, I got to my feet and hurried toward the doorway. Was this girl real, or a mere apparition? I wondered, as I answered in a shaking, trembling voice that this was indeed Mr. Brasher's room and that she was most welcome to become a part of the room. "Yes, most welcome," I added with emphasis, trying to lead her to a vacant seat near the window, three rows from the front.

"I . . . I . . . thank you," she said, speaking softly quiet and brushing my hand off her arm. "I'll wait in the hallway until Mr. Brasher gets here. Thank you, again." And she faded behind the wall.

Abashed and humiliated, I "faded" into my seat. Surprisingly enough, none of the fellows snickered at me and none of the girls countered with, "It serves you right," either. Jean Smedley had us mesmerized. All thirty-two of us. (Though at the time we didn't know she was Jean Smedley. Or Jean Anybody, for that matter).

For once (miracle of miracles!), our home room became totally and completely quiet. I didn't know what the others were thinking (nor did I bother my brain to try to find out); I only knew that I had looked upon the face of the
most beautiful girl in all the world -- a girl wearing the graces of true womanhood in all its modesty and simplicity. Her eyes were deep, dark pools, and tender looking as a fawn's, I thought, and just as shy, too.

This girl was genuine. Instinct told me so. Genuine, and genuinely different.

Quite unexpectedly, Mr. Brasher's voice sliced into my pleasant daydreaming with the suddenness of an exploding firecracker.

"Class," he said, ushering the girl toward his desk, "this is Jean Smedley, a newcomer to our community. Get acquainted with her after school and make her feel welcome."

Get acquainted with her, Mr. Brasher had said. Suddenly, for all my desire to do just that, I felt shy and weak-kneed; a thing most uncommon for me.

I tried to lose myself in math -- my favorite subject -- but the noble attempt was really quite impossible: The name Smedley had fastened itself on my brain and clung to it tenaciously and relentlessly, setting my mind in a dizzy whirl of questions demanding an answer. "Smedley..." I repeated again.

"Pardon?" Mr. Brasher exclaimed loudly, looking straight at me across the rim of his drooping, dark rimmed glasses.

I gulped and made no reply.

"What did you say, Bradley?" he questioned again, a hint of impatience and agitation registering in his voice.

"I . . . I was thinking out loud, I guess," I stammered in embarrassment.

Mr. Brasher "Ahem-ed" several times (his way of expressing disapproval and great displeasure). Then he said sternly, "Think quietly next time." It was a command and a warning.

"Yes . . . Sir," I replied, riveting my eyes in fixed determination upon the open math book on my desk, my mind all the while a whirligig over the name Smedley.
It was almost maddening (to say the least) -- my obsession over a name.

Needless to say, I did poorly in my classes all day. I breathed a heavy sigh of relief when finally the last buzzer sounded and school was dismissed.

To say that our home room class did its best to make Jean Smedley feel welcome and wanted and a part of us would be an understatement. They literally swarmed around her; so much so that I feared they might smother her. And her with the shyness and timidity of an innocent fawn!

I hung around the outside school steps until the last classmate had expressed his or her delight over having Jean as a vital part of Laurel High. Then I approached her . . . almost reverently . . . feeling that I was in the presence of a holy person.

"Smedley. You say your name is Jean Smedley?" I began. "I'm Bradley Sonnet and I'm pleased to meet you."

"Sonnet. Did you say Sonnet?"

Jean's face brightened perceptibly; her eyes were shining; her lips parted in a smile.

Taken aback, I dropped my eyes. She couldn't be making fun of me, could she? I wondered quickly, trying to think how I might react had I heard the name Sonnet for the first time.

Cautiously I raised my eyes to meet hers. Her face was a study of eager anticipation and delight.

"Did you say your name was Sonnet?" Jean asked quickly. "You know, Sonnet . . . like a poem or . . . or a song. Did I hear you correctly."

I gulped; then I smiled. "I guess I didn't know people would think of my last name as being poetic or . . . or musical," I stammered, watching Jean's eyes grow wide with wonder. "But you heard me right; Sonnet's the name -- Bradley Sonnet. And for all its plainness, you make it sound . . . beautiful."
"It is beautiful!" Jean declared shyly-emphatic. "The Sonnets we knew were beautiful people! Such devout Christians, and so godly. They led Mother and Father and our entire family to God. The company for whom John Sonnet worked transferred him elsewhere and, as is so often the case, we lost trace of each other. Your name calls back many precious memories of the John Sonnets whom we knew."

I gulped, not once or twice but five or six times. The pieces were falling in place and coming together now. "Would you, perhaps, know a John Sonnet?" Jean's question hit me like a bomb. Suddenly I knew why the name nagged me like a haunting melody. With a trembling voice I said, "John Sonnet is my father."

"Praise the Lord!" Jean exclaimed, her face radiant and her eyes shedding tears of joy. "I . . . I can scarcely believe what I've heard!" she added happily. "You're all Christians?" she asked quickly, taking me totally and completely by surprise.

Not only did I drop my eyes this time but my head, as well.

Sensing my embarrassment, Jean said quickly. . . . sadly, "I . . . I'm sorry, Bradley. I was so positive, so sure, that each of the Sonnets was still saved and sanctified wholly and joyously serving the Lord that I had to ask the question. We owe so much to you folks."

Again I swallowed -- hard, this time. The knot that popped involuntarily in the middle of my esophagus seemed like it would choke me. I wanted to fade away, to be alone, to sob the ache and the hurt out of my heart.

I was barely nine when my father's company transferred him to our present place. This explained the reason of the elusive but mind-racking name. Other things, however, and other times washed over me with the mighty force of rolling surf: times when Dad and Mother were genuinely different -- in Christ and through Christ; times of glorious revival meetings, one in which I was soundly converted and filled with the glorious presence of the Divine Comforter; times of family altars; times of witnessing and winning souls to Christ; and times of answered prayer.

On and on the memory of blessings and blessed times in Christ paraded before me. But the grind of too much business, with its associate
evils of abundance of wealth and the accumulation of unnecessary material things, insidiously but surely robbed us of our spiritual joy and strength. And now, standing in the presence of Jean Smedley, I felt like I was a pauper; a spiritual pauper.

"Perhaps this is God's reason for sending us here." Jean's soft voice sliced into my broken heart and through my thoughts.

"I . . . I wish someone could help us," I confessed hoarsely and honestly. "Life has never been the same since we left God out of our lives and stopped going to church."

I heard a soft sob and, looking down upon the petite figure before me, I saw that Jean was weeping.

"You . . . can . . . have His joy and . . . and His peace restored to your . . . heart again," she told me brokenly. "He's waiting for you, Bradley. O He is! He calls you even now, saying 'Return unto me, and I will return unto you . . . .'" Mal. 3:7.

"Jean! Jean!" I cried shamelessly, "I want His peace. Could you help us find our way back again? Tonight perhaps? I'm sure my folks will respond: they've been so unhappy."

That was four years ago. And since that night the Sonnets have been making music, not only in their hearts and in their home but in their church, too. We are happy again, in the Lord!

And, oh yes, one thing more: Jean says she feels quite poetic signing her new name . . . Jean Elizabeth Sonnet.