

“Leaning on the Everlasting Arms” ~ Elisha Albright Hoffman

The idea for this song came from Anthony Showalter, principal of the Southern Normal Music Institute in Dalton, Georgia. Showalter, a Presbyterian elder, was a well-known advocate of gospel music. He published over 130 music books with combined sales of two million copies, and he became known through the South for his singing schools in local churches.

Showalter took a personal interest in his students and enjoyed keeping up with them as the years passed. One evening in 1887, he was leading a singing school in a local church in Hartselle, Alabama. After dismissing the class for the evening, he gathered his materials and returned to his boardinghouse.

Two letters had arrived, both from former pupils. Each of the young men was heartbroken, having just lost his wife. Professor Showalter went to the Bible, looking for a verse to comfort them. He selected Deuteronomy 33:27

"The eternal God is your refuge, And underneath are the everlasting arms..."

As he pondered that verse, these words came to mind:

*Leaning, leaning, safe and secure from all alarms;
Leaning, Leaning, leaning on the everlasting arms.*

He scribbled replies to his bereaved friends, then, reaching for another piece of paper, he wrote his friend, hymnist Elisha Hoffman. "Here is the chorus for a good hymn from Deuteronomy 33:27," his letter said, "but I can't come up with any verses." Hoffman wrote 3 stanzas and sent them back. Showalter set it all to music, and ever since, these words have sheered us in adversity.

What have I to dread, what have I fear,

leaning on the everlasting arms.

I have blessed peace with my Lord so near,

leaning on the everlasting arms.

What a fellowship, what a joy divine,

Leaning on the everlasting arms;

What a blessedness, what a peace is mine,

Leaning on the everlasting arms.

*Leaning, leaning, safe and secure from all alarms;
Leaning, leaning, leaning on the everlasting arms.*

*O how sweet to walk in this pilgrim way,
Leaning on the everlasting arms;
O how bright the path grows from day to day,
Leaning on the everlasting arms.*

*Leaning, leaning, safe and secure from all alarms;
Leaning, leaning, leaning on the everlasting arms.*

*What have I to dread, what have I to fear,
Leaning on the everlasting arms;
I have blessed peace with my Lord so near,
Leaning on the everlasting arms.*

*Leaning, leaning, safe and secure from all alarms;
Leaning, leaning, leaning on the everlasting arms.*