Hymn of Breaking Strain

He went over it in his head, plate by plate, span by span, brick by brick, pier by pier,
remembering, comparing, estimating, and recalculating, lest there should be any mistake;
and through the long hours and through the flights of formulae that danced
and wheeled before him, a cold fear would come to pinch his heart...

Text: Rudyard Kipling, 1935, alt. Music: Leslie Fish, 1983

BREAKING STRAIN 76.76.76.76.6 arr. Kenan Schaefkofer, 2021

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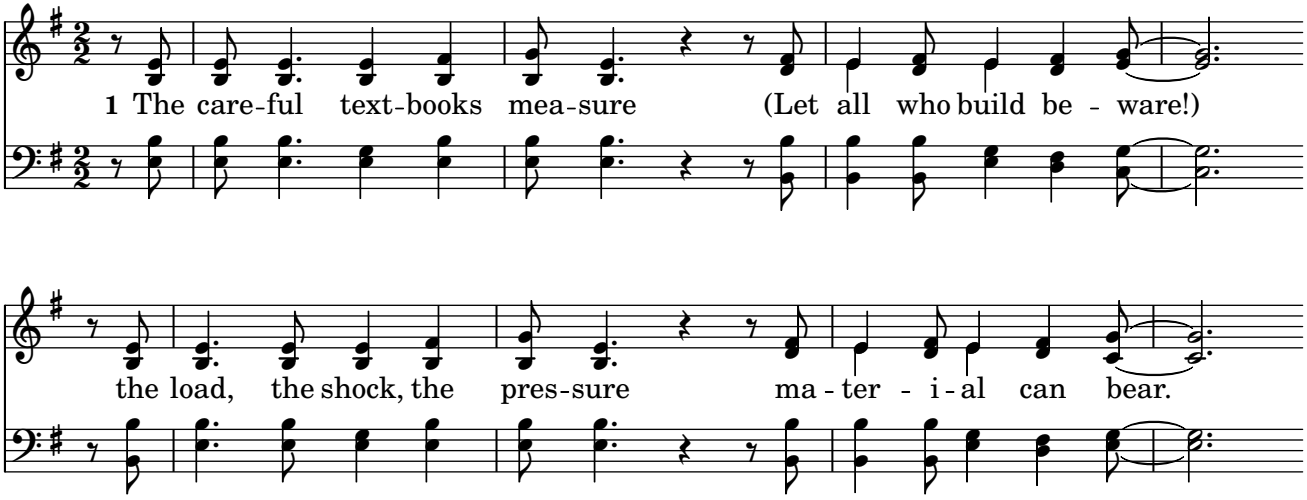
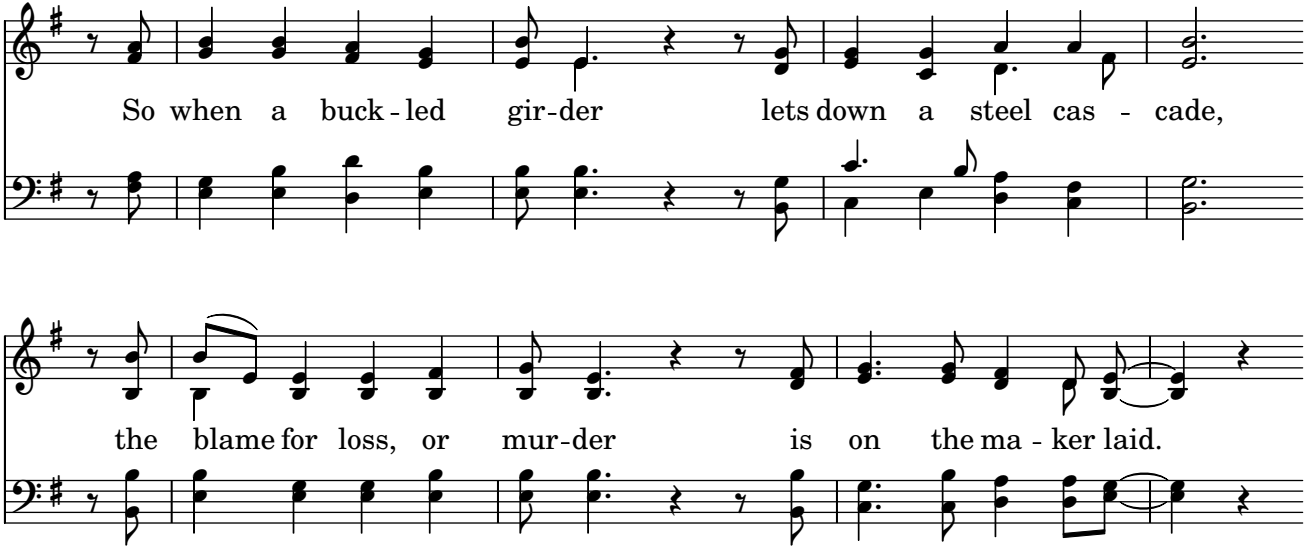
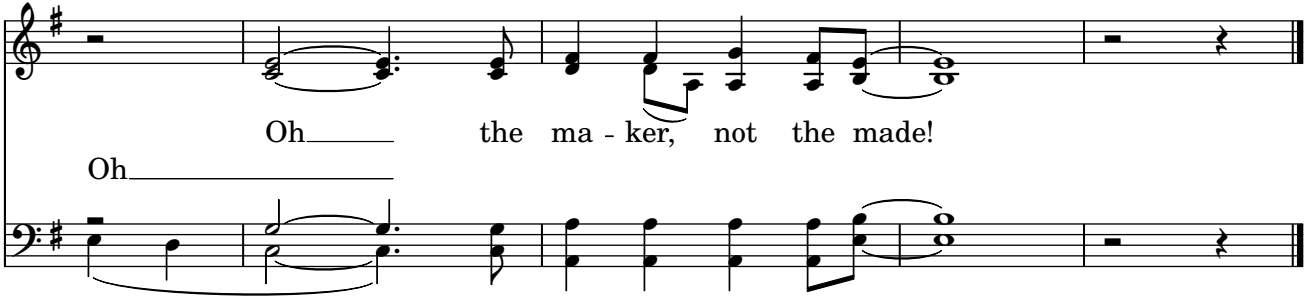
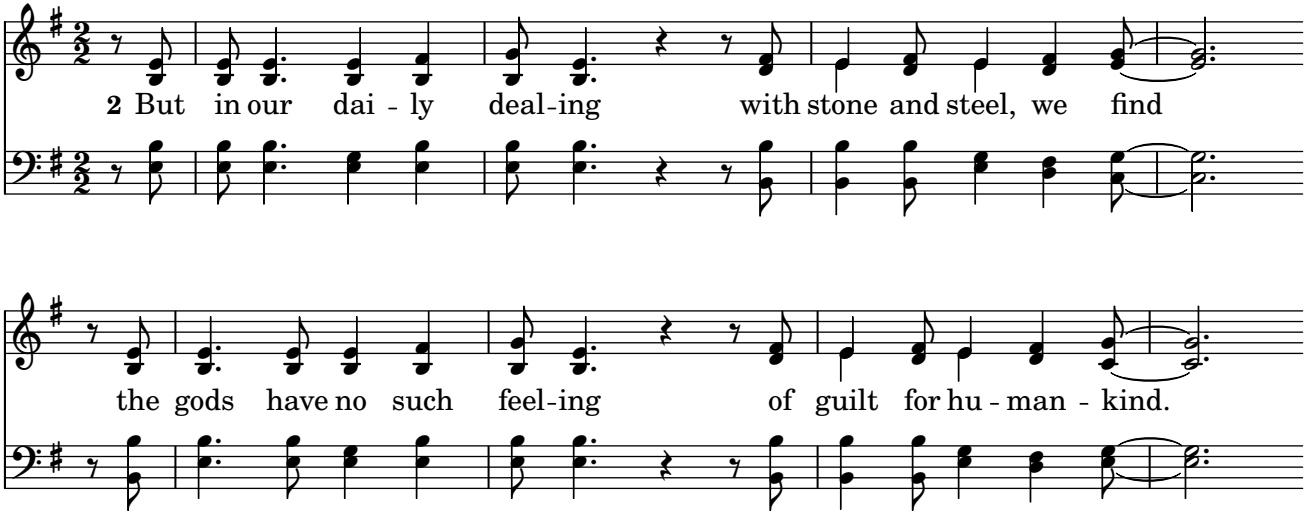

1 The care-ful text-books mea-sure (Let all who build be - ware!)
the load, the shock, the pres-sure ma - ter - i - al can bear.

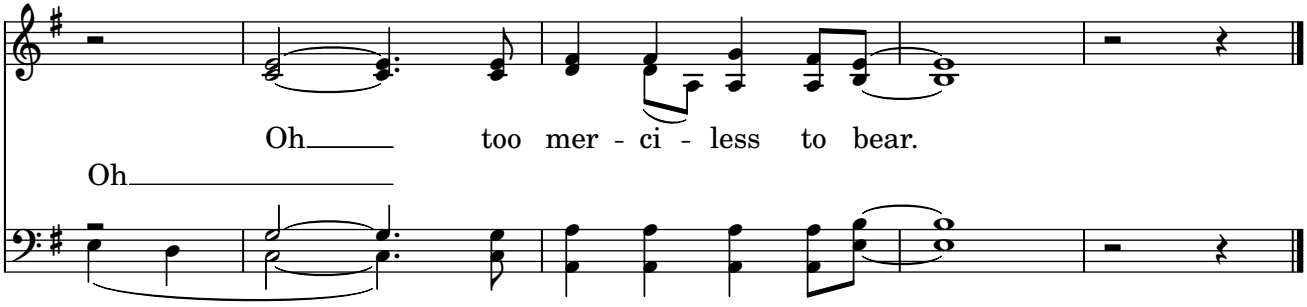

So when a buck - led gir - der lets down a steel cas - cade,
the blame for loss, or mur - der is on the ma - ker laid.

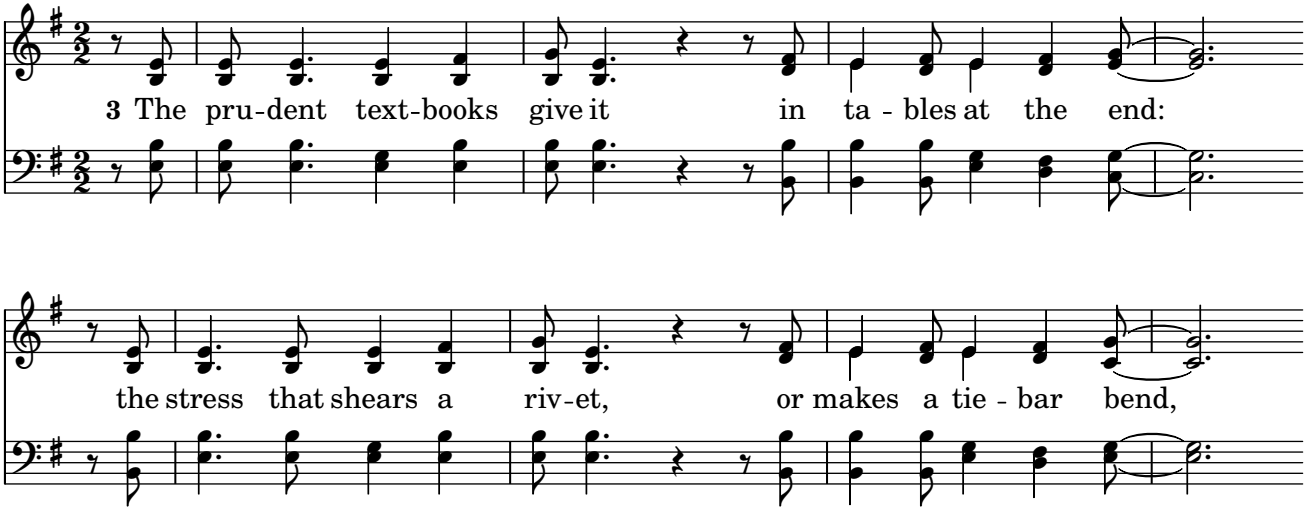

Oh the ma - ker, not the made!
Oh


2 But in our dai - ly deal-ing with stone and steel, we find
the gods have no such feel-ing of guilt for hu - man - kind.

To no set gauge they make us, for no laid course pre - pare,

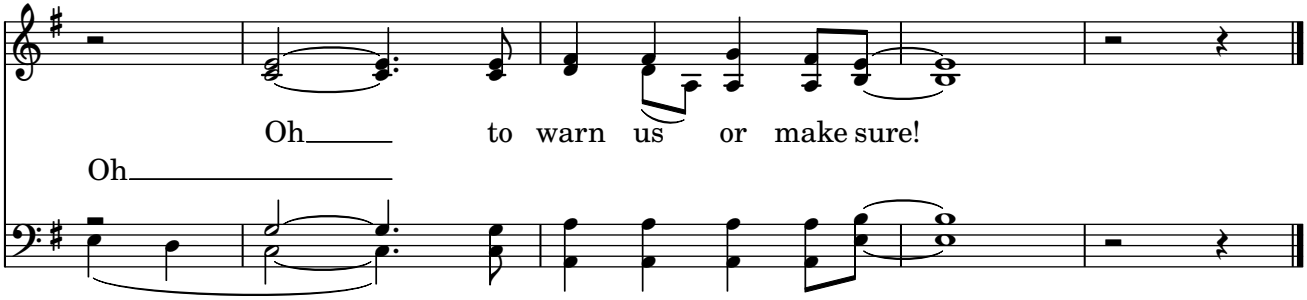
and pres-ent - ly o'er - take us with loads we can - not bear:

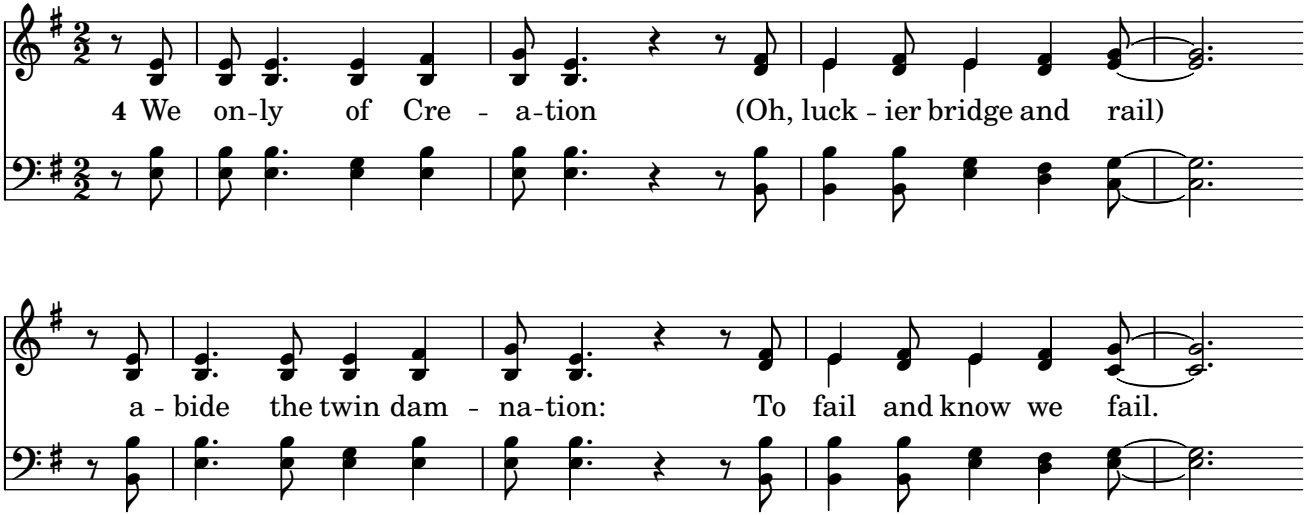

Oh too mer - ci - less to bear.
Oh

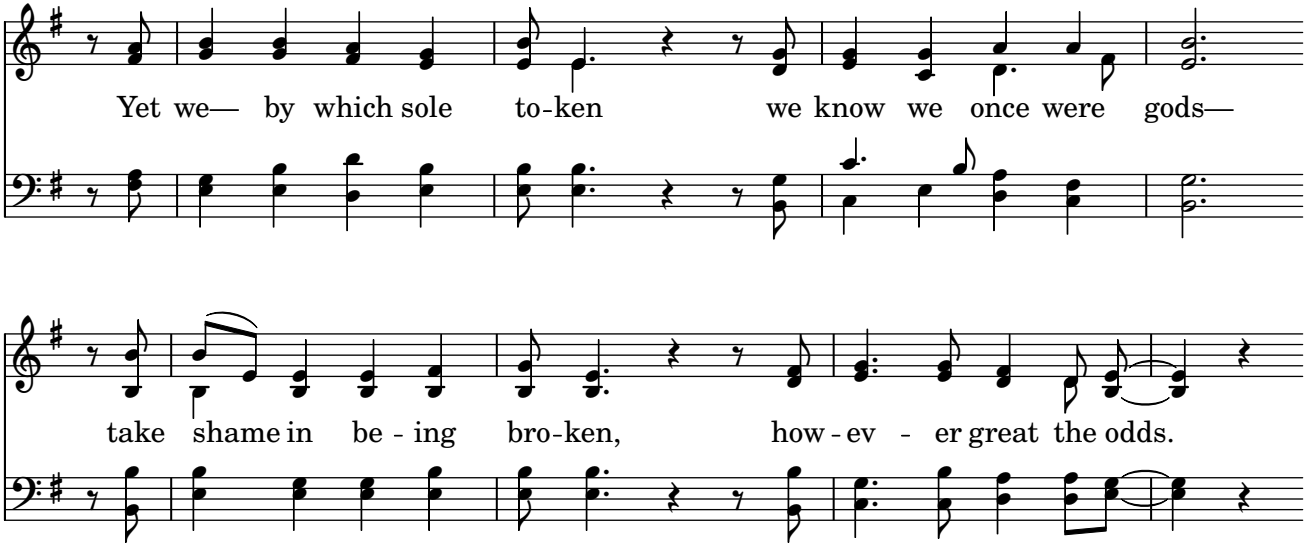

3 The pru-dent text-books give it in ta - bles at the end:
the stress that shears a riv-et, or makes a tie - bar bend,

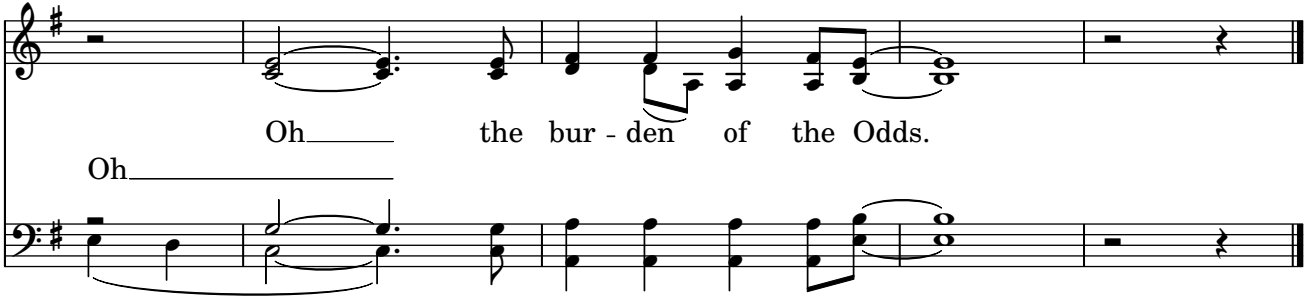
what traf - fic wrecks mac - a-dam, what con-crete should en - dure.

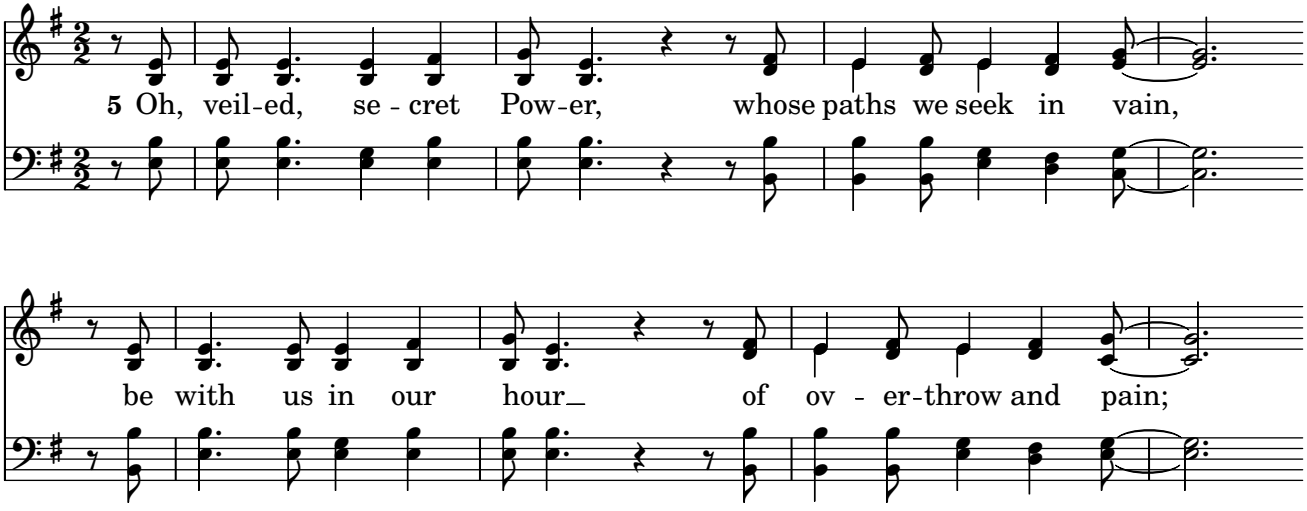
But we, of Eve and A-dam have no such lit' - ra-ture,


Oh to warn us or make sure!
Oh


4 We on-ly of Cre - a-tion (Oh, luck - ier bridge and rail)
a - bide the twin dam - na-tion: To fail and know we fail.

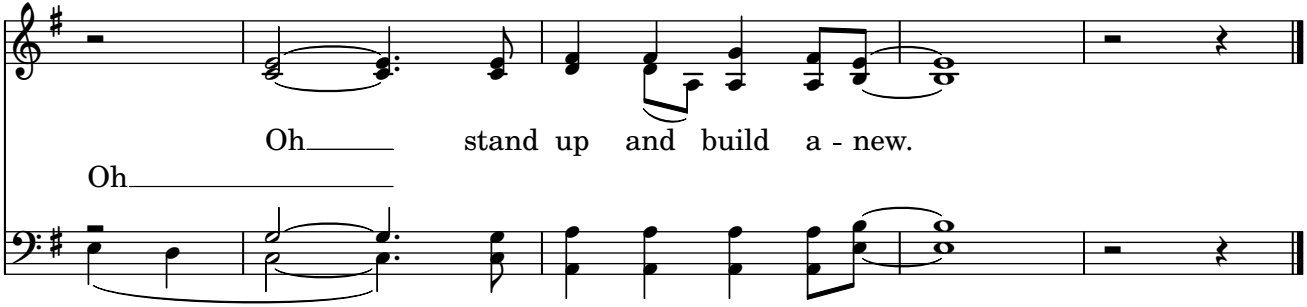

Yet we— by which sole to-ken we know we once were gods—
take shame in be - ing bro-ken, how - ev - er great the odds.


Oh the bur - den of the Odds.
Oh


5 Oh, veil-ed, se - cret Pow-er, whose paths we seek in vain,
be with us in our hour of ov - er-throw and pain;

that we— by which sure to-ken we know Thy ways are true—

be - cause of be - ing bro-ken, may rise and build a - new.


Oh stand up and build a - new.
Oh