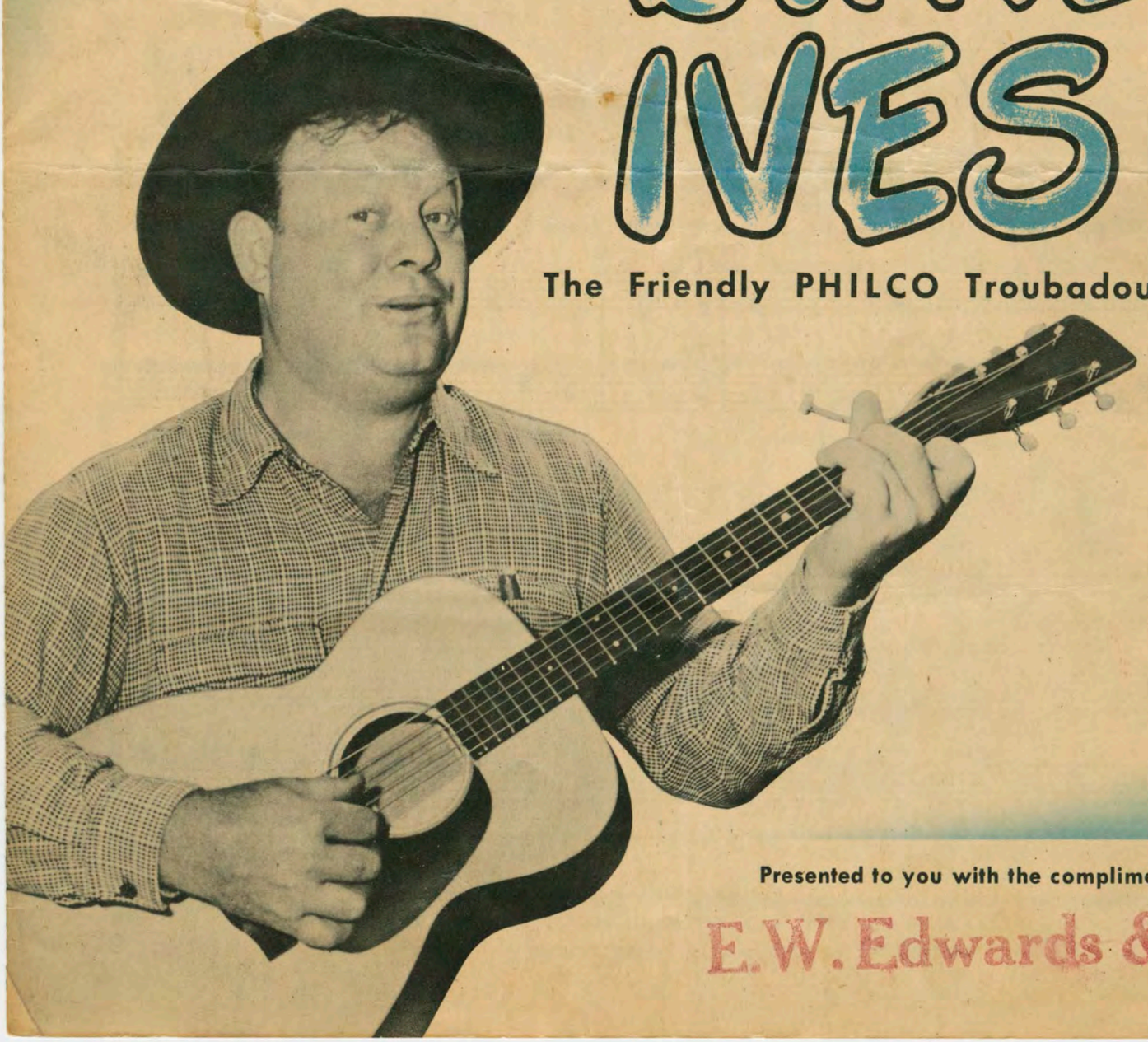
THE BLUE TAIL FLY

AMERICA'S FAVORITE BALLAD
FOR OVER SEVENTY-FIVE YEARS

As Sung by America's Mightiest Ballad Singer

BURL IVES

The Friendly PHILCO Troubadour



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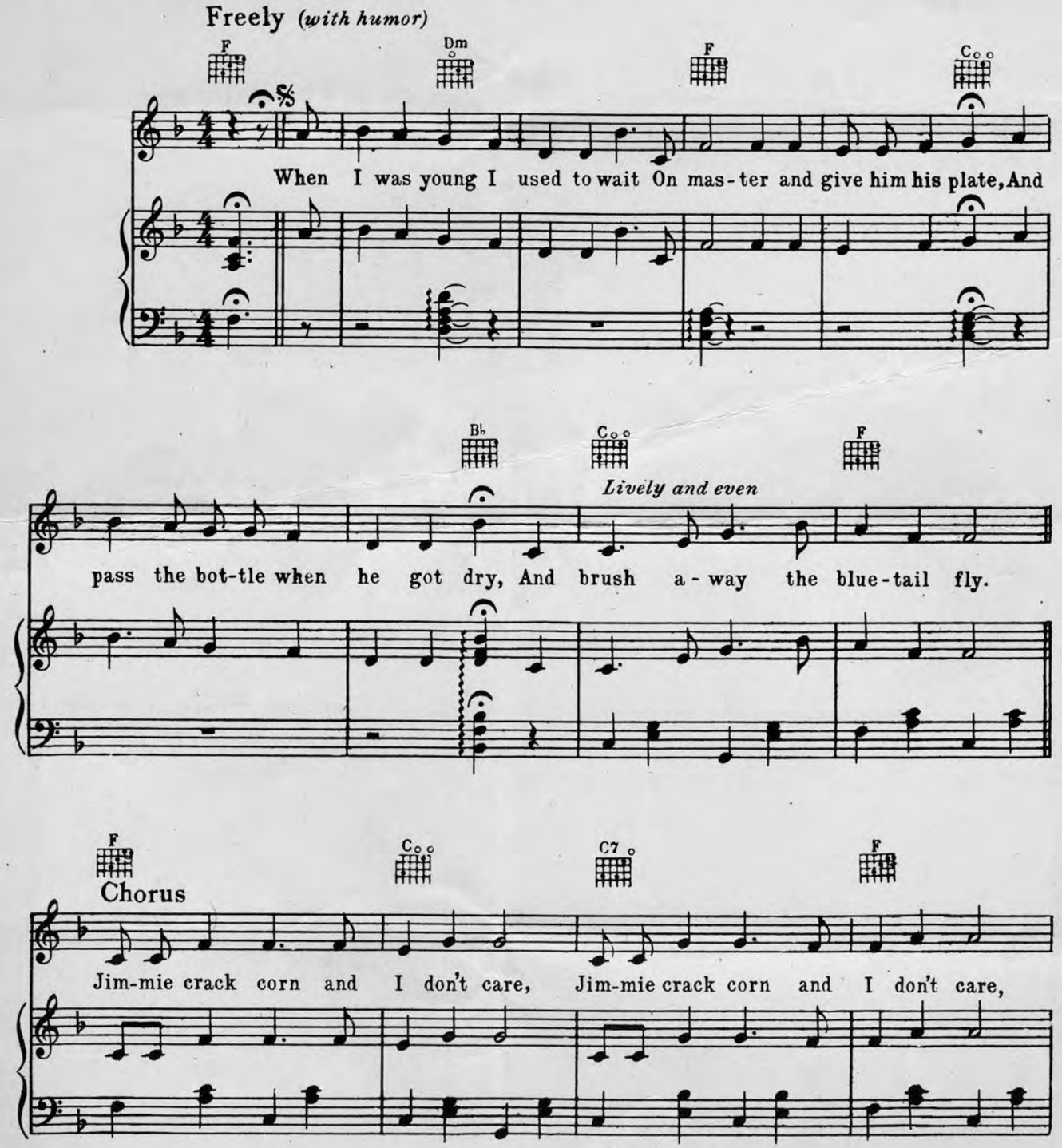
The Blue Tail Fly

Christy's Minstrels who first publicized Stephen Foster's early minstrel songs, also performed this song. It was first printed in the "Ethiopian-Glee Book" in 1848 under the title, JIMMIE CRACK CORN. The sentiments expressed in it are mildly satirical; but in the following years, approaching the Civil War, the anti-slavery theme became more marked and overt in many minstrel songs such as THE YEAR OF JUBILO. According to Carl Sandburg, THE BLUE TAIL FLY was one of Lincoln's favorite tunes.



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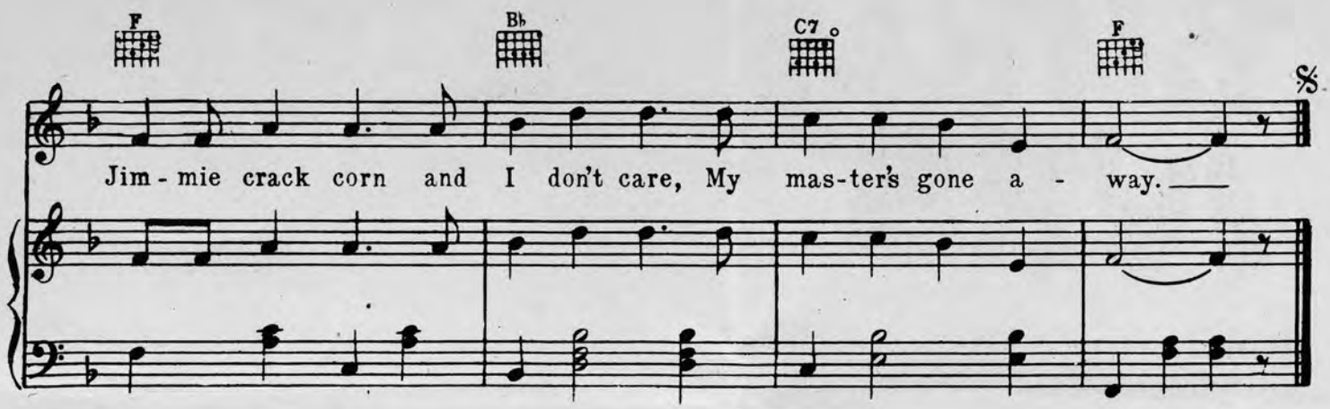
1. When I was young I used to wait
On master and give him his plate,
And pass the bottle when he got dry,
And brush away the blue-tail fly.

Chorus: Jimmie crack corn and I don't care,
Jimmie crack corn and I don't care,
Jimmie crack corn and I don't care,
My master's gone away.

2. And when he'd ride in the afternoon,
I'd follow after with a hickory broom,
The pony being rather shy
When bitten by a blue-tail fly.

Chorus: Jimmie crack corn (etc.)

3 One day he ride around the farm,
The flies so numerous, they did swarm.
One chanced to bite him on the thigh;
The devil take the blue-tail fly!

Chorus: Jimmie crack corn (etc.)

4. The pony run, he jump, he pitch;
He threw my master in the ditch.
He died and the jury wondered why—
The verdict was the blue-tail fly.

Chorus: Jimmie crack corn (etc.)

5. They lay him under a 'simmon tree;
His epitaph is there to see:
"Beneath this stone I'm forced to lie,
Victim of the blue-tail fly."

Chorus: Jimmie crack corn (etc.)

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