

Vaccination Day

My name is William Gerard Burke-
 Both sides a good old stock-
 And now I'll tell you of the work
 When they cut us for the pock.

The doctor had a little knife,
 He said he'd do no harm,
 But I thought he would have my life
 When he stuck it in my arm.

But faith, that was not half the worst,
 He prodded me most awful.
 If I was big I would have cursed
 Altho' 'twould not be lawful.

I shouted, wriggled, oh great Scott!
 Now only for my Pappy,
 I'd kill that Doctor on the spot,
 And then I would be happy.

At last the awful work was o'er-
 Young Hogan was the next,
 And when I heard that young chap roar,
 I was not half so vexed.

And then the doctor's little son
 That cruel man did skiver,
 And when the prodding job was done
 The fright made us three shiver.

As me and Jimmie left the place
 The people came in dozens,
 And said it was a disgrace,
 To nearly kill the cousins.

As Clare's M.P., I'll vent my spleen,
 And when Ireland is a nation,
 I'll pass a Bill in College Green,
 Forbidding Vaccination.

And when I'm old and very grey,
 I won't forget the shock
 I felt upon that dreadful day
 They cut us for the pock.

W.S.B. September, 18th 1905.

The two boys mentioned in the poem were; William Gerard Burke, known as Liam to his family, who was born on 16 August 1904 and died on 15 January 1913 and James Hogan, known as Jimmie/Jemmie to his family, who was born on 18 January 1905 and died in 1913. Liam and Jemmie were 2nd cousins and both died of pneumonia. The author of the poem W.S.B. was William Stanislaus Burke, father of William Gerard and owner of the *Munster News* newspaper.