

From 'Travail' [Peter and his mates have been caught in an explosion]

Then I edged for a shell hole out of sight.
All through the night half sleeping there I lay,
Keeping my toes dug in the skiting clay---
And once I slipped and cracked the surface ice
Beneath.

Between my thighs ten million lice
I thought, kept itching, itching on my skin.
Something once brushed, and greased along my lip
Its icy, soaking pelt. Then my left hip
Took cramp just when I'd recognised the day
Toning the night. I slipt again and lay.

A crackling rattle asked. ---

Machine gun fire---

And some replied---

A wind up---

"Blurry tire'

I am wi' this," I thought,

and the stiff mud

And ice and clay were like dead flesh and blood,

Frozen, forgotten, stabbing into me

Where I was clinging.--- And I couldn't see

The edge above. I could see it before---

I think I fainted then--- My head was sore.

*From George Dickson, Peter Rae (London: George Allen, 1925), pp.57-8.
Mitchell Library 'Poet's Corner' P244*