**Source A: *Why we shouldn’t wrap our children in cotton wool* by Tim Lott (The Guardian, 2014)**

*My youngest daughter had a bad bike accident recently but it won't change my mind on the message I give my children.*

I'm not a Catholic but I find this week's column has more in common with a confessional box than a newspaper column. Last week, I was cycling with my seven-year-old, Louise. She wasn't cycling – she was perched on the back of my bike, with her helmet on, holding on to my waist. We had travelled many times this way before without incident.

As I was cycling I heard a rasping scream. My daughter is a habitual screamer, but this was different. I braked immediately, but lost balance as she was shifting about so much on the back. The bike slowly toppled over. I was thrown one way, and Louise fell with the bike. She had been screaming because her ankle had got mangled in the moving spokes of my back wheel.

I lifted her and put her on my lap and inspected her wound. It was horrible. Huge and grey and blue and red and traumatised. The wheel spokes had ripped her shoe and sock off, leaving her bare flesh vulnerable.

Fortunately, the accident happened outside the house of some friends in the area. They brought us in, as Louise wept pitifully and I held her in my arms, the awful vision of her lower leg tugging at the corner of my eye line. Then, in between her screams of pain, she looked at me for a moment, and said, with absolute faith that I would be able to: "Help me, Daddy." And I couldn't.

Our friends drove us to my house, where my wife, who is a nurse, took her to hospital. Tests showed that there may have been a small fracture and her skin was flayed, and could turn necrotic if not watched carefully. All this pain, all these wounds, were down to me. Now she has to walk on a crutch until it improves – a matter of weeks.

Louise is out of hospital now and we are travelling to Mallorca, where she will not have such a nice time as she might, as she is going to be confined to a pushchair and a crutch. When anyone asks her what happens to her foot, she answers: "I don't want to talk about it." I hope it's just the memory of the physical trauma and not her father standing helpless in the face of her pain.

I have always believed that fear of risk was not something to inculcate in children – to be over-precautionary and constantly reminding them that the world is a dangerous place. We never tell our children not to talk to strangers. We allow the 11-year-old to go to the shopping centre with friends, on their own. Sometimes we pile too many children than is strictly legal in the back of a car. I am, in other words, a fairly lax parent, somewhat by choice. Perhaps that is just the rationalisation that I have always used to justify my behaviour.

And yet, and yet … I still can't find it in myself to renounce my former philosophy – which others, I know, will see as pure fecklessness. Wrapping your children in cotton wool and living every day as if a multitude of dangers were each crowding out the other to get their fangs into them still seems to me an unhealthy message to broadcast. If your parents allow you to climb trees, sometimes you will fall off them. If you're allowed to go wandering alone in a wood, sometimes you're going to get lost.

I feel awful about what happened. I certainly won't travel with Louise on the back of my bike again. But I refuse to swing to the other extreme – to a world seen through distorting spectacles that show only hazard. No one goes through childhood without getting hurt. And I won't let the continuing pangs of my guilt prevent my children living a childhood where confidence, not fear, is the wellspring of behaviour.

**Source B: *London Labour and the London Poor* by Henry Mayhew (1851)**

The little watercress girl who gave me the following statement, although only eight years of age, had entirely lost all childish ways, and was, indeed, in thoughts and manner, a woman. There was something cruelly pathetic in hearing this infant, so young that her features had scarcely formed themselves, talking of the bitterest struggles of life, with the calm earnestness of one who had endured them all. I did not know how to talk with her. At first I treated her as a child, speaking on childish subjects; so that I might, by being familiar with her, remove all shyness, and get her to narrate her life freely. I asked her about her toys and her games with her companions; but the look of amazement that answered me soon put an end to any attempt at fun on my part. I then talked to her about the parks, and whether she ever went to them. “The parks!” she replied in wonder, “where are they?” I explained to her, telling her that they were large open places with green grass and tall trees, where beautiful carriages drove about, and people walked for pleasure, and children played. Her eyes brightened up a little as I spoke; and she asked, half doubtingly, “Would they let such as me go there - just to look?” All her knowledge seemed to begin and end with watercresses, and what they fetched. She knew no more of London than that part she had seen on her rounds, and believed that no quarter of the town was handsomer or pleasanter than it was at Farringdon-market or at Clerkenwell, where she lived. Her little face, pale and thin with privation, was wrinkled where the dimples ought to have been, and she would sigh frequently. When some hot dinner was offered to her, she would not touch it, because, if she eat too much, “it made her sick,” she said; “and she wasn't used to meat, only on a Sunday.”

The poor child, although the weather was severe, was dressed in a thin cotton gown, with a threadbare shawl wrapped round her shoulders. She wore no covering to her head, and the long rusty hair stood out in all directions. When she walked she shuffled along, for fear that the large carpet slippers that served her for shoes should slip off her feet.

"I go about the streets with water-creases, crying, 'Four bunches a penny, water-creases.' I am just eight years old - that's all, and I've a big sister, and a brother and a sister younger than I am. On and off, I've been very near a twelvemonth in the streets. Before that, I had to take care of a baby for my aunt. No, it wasn't heavy - it was only two months old; but I minded it for ever such a time - till it could walk. It was a very nice little baby, not a very pretty one; but, if I touched it under the chin, it would laugh. Before I had the baby, I used to help mother, who was in the fur trade; and, if there was any slits in the fur, I'd sew them up. My mother learned me to needle-work and to knit when I was about five. I used to go to school, too; but I wasn't there long. I've forgot all about it now, it's such a time ago; and mother took me away because the master whacked me, though the missus use'n't to never touch me. I didn't like him at all. What do you think? He hit me three times, ever so hard, across the face with his cane, and made me go dancing down stairs; and when mother saw the marks on my cheek, she went to blow him up, but she couldn't see him - he was afraid. That's why I left school.