

figures obtainable on the matter, but it was possible to make a fairly accurate estimate.

### **"ABLE-BODIED PAUPERS."**

Among those who were termed "Able-Bodied" in our Workhouses were to be found persons suffering from the loss of a limb, from epilepsy, blindness, or other diseases. An able-bodied person under the Poor Law was simply a person under sixty years of age, who, according to the Local Government Board, was able to get to the dining hall to take his or her meals.

The number of people that had to be dealt with under the Poor Law in England and Wales was thus very considerable. The Poor Law Guardians never treated a sick person because he was sick, but simply because he was destitute. The idea set up in the mind of the Relieving Officer was always to find reasons why he should not administer relief, not why he should. Speaking without exaggeration, he declared that the sole business in life of a Relieving Officer was only to relieve distress where it was quite impossible to him to find out any reasons why he should not, and the Board of Guardians which the Local Government Board looked on with most favour was the Board which had the fewest number of people on its roll, and in fact relieved nobody.

### **WHY OUT-DOOR RELIEF FAILS.**

When a Board of Guardians set to work to relieve cases of destitution caused through sickness, it had two methods. One was outdoor relief, under which the majority of the cases were dealt with. The other was indoor relief. The outdoor relief administered was about as inefficient as it well could be, and for this reason. The Boards of Guardians took no care to see that the relief given was adequate to the need they were supposed to meet. It was not their business to inquire or investigate into the sanitary condition of the home, or as to whether a person was able to provide the necessary nursing accommodation. The result was that at that very moment there were thousands of men, women, and children who were suffering miserably and wretchedly because they were nobody's real care. Those who wanted proof of this assertion should go on a visiting tour with either a Relieving Officer or a Poor Law Guardian. One reason that made him a rebel against the existing *régime* was not merely his experience in helping to administer the Poor Law in Poplar, but his personal experience gained in going round for eighteen months visiting relief cases.

He had seen a man suffering from phthisis with seven children, the whole family getting 10/- a week and living all in one room. Anybody in their senses could see that relief of this kind was not given in an efficient manner. He had seen