Upton Sinclair's *The Jungle*, excerpt

This excerpt is from Upton Sinclair's novel, *The Jungle*, which recounted in a realistic style the fictional story of immigrant workers in the Chicago meatpacking plants. Sinclair had investigated the meatpacking plants, and the descriptions in his novel were based firmly on his observations. Sinclair was most concerned for the safety and rights of the workers in these plants, but the American public and President Theodore Roosevelt were perhaps even more appalled by the danger that the unregulated and unsanitary meatpacking plants posed to American consumers. With gigantic plants processing meat for entire regions of the country, the sanitary conditions of the industry could no longer remain an issue of local importance. Roosevelt urged Congress to address the issue, and in 1906 the first national inspection system was established by law. Sinclair and other critics of the meatpacking industry welcomed governmental regulation, but were deeply disappointed by the weak provisions and insufficient funding provided for the new regulatory system.

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Excerpt from *The Jungle*, Chapter IX

There were the men in the pickle rooms, for instance, where old Antanas had gotten his death; scarce a one of these that had not some spot of horror on his person. Let a man so much as scrape his finger pushing a truck in the pickle-rooms, and like as not he would have a sore that would put him out of the world; all the joints in his fingers might be eaten by the acid, one by one. Of the butchers and floormen, the beef-boners and trimmers, and all those who used knives, you could scarcely find a person who had the use of his thumb; time and time again the base of it had been slashed, till it was a mere lump of flesh against which the man pressed the knife to hold it. The hands of these men would be crisscrossed with cuts, until you could no longer pretend to count them or to trace them. They would have no nails—they had worn them off pulling hides; their knuckles were swollen so that their fingers spread out like a fan. There were men who worked in the cooking-rooms, in the midst of steam and sickening odors, by artificial light; in these rooms the germs of tuberculosis might live for two years, but the supply is renewed every hour. There were the beef-luggers, who carried two hundred pound quarters into the refrigerator-cars; this was a fearful kind of work, that began at four o'clock in the morning, and that wore out the most powerful men in a few years. There were those who worked in the chilling-rooms, and whose special disease was rheumatism; ...