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**SUGGESTIONS**

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TO THE

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**HOUSEWIFE**

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Department of  
**WEIGHTS AND MEASURES**  
District of Columbia  
1911



SUGGESTIONS  
TO THE  
HOUSEWIFE

COMMISSIONERS OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA  
DEPARTMENT OF WEIGHTS, MEASURES AND MARKETS  
WASHINGTON

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THIS PAMPHLET IS ISSUED BY THE  
DEPARTMENT OF WEIGHTS, MEASURES  
AND  
MARKETS  
OF THE  
DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA.

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Office of the Superintendent: Rooms 313-317 Dis-  
trict Building.

Office open—9 a. m. to 4.20 p. m. Mondays, Tues-  
days, Wednesdays, Thursdays and Fridays, and  
from 9 a. m. to 3 p. m. on Saturdays.

Telephoné Main 6000.

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NOTE—This pamphlet contains extracts from a  
pamphlet issued by the Mayor's Bureau of the  
City of New York, to which Bureau it is desired  
due credit shall be given.

Also extracts from the laws governing the use  
of scales, weights and measures, and the sale of  
commodities in the District of Columbia.

# Valuable Information for the Housewife.

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This pamphlet is issued by the Department of Weights and Measures of the District of Columbia for the guidance of the purchasing public.

Read this pamphlet carefully, and if you carry out the instructions contained herein you will do much to protect yourself against loss.

If your neighbor has not a copy of this pamphlet, and desires one, write to the Superintendent of Weights and Measures, Room 313, District Building, and a copy of the same will be mailed, free of charge, immediately upon receipt of your letter.

No kitchen is complete without a good scale, tested and sealed and a set of sealed dry and liquid measures.

To properly protect yourself against being defrauded, it is better that you provide your household with a good scale and a set of accurate dry and liquid measures. When you buy your scale or measures, to be sure that they are accurate you should send them to the office of the superintendent of Weights and Measures and have them tested. Every purchase you make, when it reaches your home should immediately be reweighed or remeasured in order to ascertain whether or not your merchant delivered to you full value for your money.

To be absolutely fair with your merchant, the scale you buy should be of as good a type as you can afford and tested and sealed. Since you are judging the honesty of your merchant by the reweighing of his commodity on your scale, you should be absolutely sure that your scale is right lest you should misjudge an innocent and honest person.

A yard stick should be used in preference to a tape measure in measuring dry goods. The tape measure is generally made of a cheap muslin or cotton cloth and is usually subject to shrinkage by reason of the printing thereon and ever-present possibility of its becoming moist or damp. The same tape measure, by constant use, is equally liable to expand. At any rate, it is not a safe or accurate measure. A good yard stick can be obtained cheaply and, with a reasonable amount of care, is not likely to become inaccurate if it is accurate when purchased. To be quite sure that the yardstick you purchase is accurate, send it for test to the office of the Superintendent of Weights and Measures.

When you make purchases, whether it be in the butcher store, the grocery store or the dry goods store, insist upon the bill which you get having plainly marked thereon the weight of the quantity of the article purchased. For example: If you buy a chicken, do not be content with the butcher marking on the bill or the ticket you get, "one chicken, 48 cents"; insist upon him making the bill read, so many pounds of chicken (whatever the weight of the chicken may be) and then the price paid for it.

To understand the importance of this, your attention is called to the fact that if you buy a chicken and you discover at home that you have been shortweighted, you will have difficulty in proving this fact unless you can show by competent testimony that you asked for a certain weight or your butcher told you that the chicken was of a certain weight, and the best evidence in a case of this kind is a ticket showing the weight and the price charged.

This is true of every purchase you make. You will be greatly helping yourself if you will further insist upon the merchant putting on the same ticket the price per pound, in addition to the weight thereof.

When you purchase vegetables by the dry measure, that is, a quart or a peck or a bushel, be sure to examine the measure the merchant uses before making your purchase to be sure that it has the seal of this office on same.

When you order vegetables by the dry measure, be sure and ask for a definite quantity, such as a quart of beans, or peas, or a peck of potatoes; otherwise if you have been defrauded the merchant will always contend that he did not intend that the quantity supplied you was to be of a definite known quantity. He will always refer to it as a basket or a pail or a package of the commodity, and your chances of prosecuting him would be minimized.

The same care should be taken in ordering liquids. Do not be content with asking for a large can of olive oil. Ask for a known quantity,

such as a quart, a gallon, two gallons, etc. Nor should you be content with asking for a bottle of vinegar, but should insist on getting a quart or a pint bottle of vinegar, etc.

When you buy a quart of potatoes by the dry measure, or any other vegetable, the law requires that you get heap measure. This means that the measure itself must not only be full to the brim, but it must be heaped in the shape of a cone as high as the commodity itself will permit.

DO NOT LEAVE TRIMMINGS OF YOUR MEAT WITH THE BUTCHER.

Many butchers are very accommodating and obliging in their desire to trim the meat which you purchase of them, after the meat has been weighed and you have paid for every particle of it. For example, your order a steak at 28 cents a pound. The butcher cuts the steak and places it upon a scale. He then informs you of the price of the steak. If the steak weighs three pounds exactly, it will cost you 84 cents. Thus you are paying for every particle of the steak. He then removes the steak to the block and proceeds to "trim" the steak, cutting away certain portions of the fat and meat and bone. He then deposits all he has cut from your steak in a box beneath the counter, all of which you have already been charged for at the rate of 28 cents a pound. On the following morning the butcher again sells these trimmings, for which you have paid at the rate of 28 cents per pound, for 6, 7, and 8 cents per pound. In the meantime, you have taken your



steak home, and if you are careful you have it weighed upon the scale in your kitchen. If the butcher has been dishonest, you discover a variance between the weight charged for and the weight of the steak on your own home scale. If you go back and complain to the butcher, he will promptly tell you that the difference between the weight of the steak when he sold it to you and the weight of the same steak on your scale has been deposited in the box beneath his counter as trimmings. He has removed all possible trace of the necessary evidence in a short-weight case.

This office advises you and urges you in all cases to insist upon the trimmings being given to you or sent you with the meat. There are many uses to which you can put these trimmings at home. If the butcher can sell them for various prices per pound, certainly they must have some value in your home. The fat can be rendered into lard; the bones can be used in soup, and any careful housewife can certainly find many uses for trimmings of meat.

IT IS VERY IMPORTANT THAT YOU LEARN TO READ A SCALE in the shop. This you can only do by looking carefully at each scale that you see. This office cannot furnish a specific set of instructions in this pamphlet, because of the vast number of different types of scales being manufactured.

It is unfortunate, but nevertheless true, that the housewife in reading a scale has an absolute disregard for the ounce graduations. The average woman simply observes the pound, quarter pound

and half pound markings on the scale, and the short lines between these indications always pass her unnoticed, but they do not, however, pass the merchant unnoticed. A housewife will go into a butcher shop and ask for "about 2 pounds of steak." The butcher, of course, cannot gauge accurately in cutting meat to the extent of an even pound or two pounds, but cuts as near the amount asked for as he can. He then places it upon the scale, and instead of saying to the purchaser "2 pounds and 3 ounces," he will as a rule call out the amount he is going to charge for the meat, and the average purchaser rests content with this. The advice of this office to the housewife is to insist upon the butcher saying just how much it weighs, and not how much it costs.

Keep your eye on the scales while the merchant is weighing your purchase.

Always watch closely the tradesman and the scale when your purchase is being weighed. Do not allow him to put his hands on either the scale or any portion of it or upon the meat or commodity when it is upon the scale and being weighed. The moment the merchant puts his hand or knife on the scale, or in any manner touches it while your commodity is upon it, you may be defrauded.

There is no occasion and no reason for the merchant to in any manner touch the scale. Do not allow him to bring the scale to a stop unless after he has brought it to a full stop he removed his hand and permits you to read the scale.

If you are buying a leg of mutton or a leg of

lamb, or any kind of meat which projects out from the scale itself, do not permit the butcher to hold on with his hand to the meat, because this is one of the many ways in which dishonest butchers manipulate a scale.

If the scale has only one face, and that is not turned toward you, be careful to watch the hand of the butcher when he turns the scale around, so that you can read it. Be sure that he has not taken hold of any part of the scale which can affect the weighing. Be sure also that he is not holding the scale in an awkward position so that pressure can be placed upon the "runner", if it is a hanging spring scale.

#### WATCH CLOSELY HOW THE BUTCHER HANDLES A COMPUTING SCALE:

A computing scale is a scale which has a mechanical device, and which tells the operator automatically how much the commodity should cost at every price per pound. In a great many instances, this type of scale is set at a point where the weighing platform is on a level or close to the counter and so far from you as to be almost concealed and out of view, and unless you watch very carefully while your meat or any other commodity is being weighed on this type of scale, if the merchant is dishonest he will have a knife point bearing upon the platform of the scale or in some other manner putting pressure on it, thus adding to the weight of your commodity in a fraudulent manner.

These scales are highly sensitive, but all of them have attached to them what is known as a

"dash pot", and if the butcher or merchant is dishonest, there is no reason why the scale should be over-sensitive. You can judge the sensitiveness of the scale by the rapidity with which the hand or dial or weighing indicator moves. For your information, you are informed that one of the practices of dishonest butchers or grocers is to keep the scale as highly sensitive as possible, so that the hand or computing dial or weighing indicator will move so quickly as to afford him opportunity and a reason for bringing the scale to a stop with his hand, and in this way deceiving you and consequently defrauding you. No scale should be so sensitive as to create an unreasonable delay in waiting for the hand to come to a stop, and where the scale is so sensitive, it is usually because of the desire of the merchant to have it that way.

Why telephone your order to your tradesman and take a chance, when by going yourself you can be sure you are getting what you pay for? If you must use the telephone in ordering your food-stuffs, you must also take extra precautions to see that you are not being defrauded.

Avoid whenever possible, however, using the telephone in ordering, because the telephone order has proven a great temptation to defraud to the dishonest merchant.

#### A FEW DON'TS.

Don't allow your grocer or dairyman to weigh in the wooden butter dish when he is weighing your butter. These butter dishes frequently weigh, in accordance with their size, from an

ounce to three ounces. You will observe some of them very prettily decorated with tin on the edge. Remember, if they weigh these in, they are selling you the tin and the wood at the price of butter.

Don't let the fancy package goods fascinate you, because you are frequently paying very heavily for the fancy package and in most cases getting considerably less of the product than you would if buying it loose. Butter put up in prints is sanitary, but be sure you are getting 16 ounces of butter without the paper or the carton.

Don't buy in a careless manner. That is, always ask for whatever the commodity is by a known weight or measure. Avoid asking for a cupful, 5 cents' worth or 10 cents' worth, a package, a handful, a glass, a jar, a bag, a basket, a bucket or a tub. All of these terms mean nothing in the law; unless you say a pound, or a quart, or a gallon, or whatever amount you want.

Don't buy in small quantities if you can avoid it. To illustrate the danger of this, I call your attention to the following: The poor people in the city who are forced to buy in small quantities, purchase butter a quarter of a pound at a time. If a wooden dish weighing one ounce is weighed in with the butter the purchaser has been defrauded out of one ounce in every quarter pound thereof, losing one quarter of a pound by the time a full pound is paid for, whereas even if a merchant had weighed in a one-ounce butter dish with a full pound purchase of butter, there would only have been a fraud of one ounce. This holds true in all commodities.

Don't misunderstand cheapness for economy. Cheapness is not a synonym, nor in no way is it related to the word economy. Let us warn you against the merchant who always is able to sell cheaper than his neighbor. Unless you are very sure and positive about the character of your merchant, avoid patronizing him. Where there are three butchers in one neighborhood, and one man advertises at his door to sell meat very much cheaper than the other two, in most cases you may be sure that either he is substituting goat meat for lamb or selling an inferior grade of meat or short-weighting you. Cheapness never has meant economy. If you do patronize a merchant who is underselling all of his neighbors, be on your guard and watchful.

Don't leave your shopping till the last minute and then be in a hurry. It is frequently when a customer is in a great hurry that the dishonest merchant takes advantage of her. You will be greatly aiding yourself and this office if you insist upon the grocer placing the 3½ pound package of sugar or any other commodity on the scale and weighing it in your presence. Don't be content with allowing the grocer to hand you a 3½ pound package of sugar or flour from the bin already done up, unless he reweighs it in your presence, and when he places the 3½ pound package on the scoop, insist upon him putting an empty bag of the same kind that is around the sugar on the other side of the scale. Notice carefully the kind of paper he uses in putting up his product. If it is colored paper, it is frequently a very

heavy bag, sometimes as heavy as one ounce. In some instances, for example, in putting up flour, this heavy bag is necessary, because moisture must be kept out, but if the merchant desires to facilitate his own business by having his packages all done up ready for the trade, he is not entitled to weigh in his sugar and flour with this heavy bag; it is unlawful for him to do it.

Don't neglect to test the weight of package goods at home and compare them with the weight of the same commodity purchased loose. To illustrate this, try to follow it. Buy a 10-cent package of oatmeal or rolled oats; then buy 10-cents worth of loose rolled oats of the best grade. Take them both home. Empty out the package of rolled oats on your scale and weigh it; then compute how much a pound you have paid for it as a package. Remove the rolled oats which you have placed upon the scale from the scoop, and then put thereon the loose rolled oats and compute the price per pound you have paid for these. Note the difference. Determine for yourself which is more economical, allowing, of course, for the amount of sanitary protection you are getting in the package. Try this experiment with soda crackers. Buy a package of one of the standard brands of crackers at 5 cents; then purchase 5 cents worth of loose soda crackers, and do as you did in the case of rolled oats. Try this experiment with most all of the other package goods, and especially is it important that you try this experiment with bottled goods, for example vinegar. Purchase a bottle of vinegar and then a quart of loose vinegar.

Empty your bottle of vinegar into your quart measure and you will see how much less than a quart you have actually received.

Don't depend entirely upon your servants to protect you. Such a thing as a steward or a servant girl acting in collusion with a dishonest merchant to defraud the housekeeper has been heard of in Washington. Find out if in your kitchen any collusion is being practiced. Don't think you are losing time by your kitchen upon a proper system. This department assures you that if you will put your kitchen upon a proper system, and if you have any way of computing, you will find you will save a great deal of money in one year.

Don't hesitate to notify this office if you have any suspicions whatever of the merchant with whom you are doing business. Your relations with this office can be as *confidential* as you choose to make them. Always remember that while perhaps you individually may be able to stand these petty losses in your trading, that there are poorer people who are dealing with the same merchant who cannot so readily stand the loss as you can, and by informing this office you will be protecting these poorer people against loss. Do not, however, be too ready to condemn the tradesman. There are honest merchants, and hundreds of them, in the District of Columbia. Tradesmen make mistakes. A mistake need not always be a dishonest one. Let this department know of your trouble, and we can judge very promptly whether the shortage has been the result of a mistake or dishonesty.



Don't buy ice from your dealer unless he weighs it for you immediately before delivery.

Don't receive coal from your dealer, unless the driver presents a ticket with the gross, tare and net weights of the load or loads. Demand that the ticket be shown you before the coal is dumped from the wagon. The law gives you the right that all coal be re-weighed. If you have any doubt as to the honesty of the driver or the coal wagon, or the company itself, notify this office that you are to receive coal at a certain time, and we will send an inspector who will attend to the re-weighing.

READ CAREFULLY in the back part of this pamphlet, the laws on weights and measures in the District of Columbia.

Learn your rights and take advantage of them.

# QUOTATIONS FROM LAWS AND GENERAL INFORMATION CONCERNING WEIGHTS AND MEASURES, D. C.

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SEC. 8. No person shall neglect or refuse to exhibit any weights, scales, measures, beams, or other instruments used by him or her in weighing or measuring to the superintendent of weights and measures or his assistants when and whenever demanded by them, or either of them, for the purpose of inspection and stamping.

SEC. 9. \*That no person shall use for buying or selling, or for weighing freight or express matter, any weights, measures, scales, or instruments, unless the same shall have been examined and approved by the sealer or assistant sealer of weights and measures.

SEC. 10. \*No person shall sell or offer for sale anywhere in the District of Columbia, any provisions of produce or commodities of any kind for a weight or measure greater than the actual or true weight or measure thereof.

*Provided*, That poultry and vegetables usually sold by the head or bunch, may be offered for sale and sold in other manner than by weight or measure; but in all cases where the person intending to purchase shall so desire and request,

poultry shall be weighed, as hereinbefore prescribed.

SEC. 11. Any person who shall neglect or refuse to exhibit his weights, measures, scales beams, or other instruments used for the purpose of weighing or measuring to the sealer or assistant sealer of weights and measures; or any person who shall use, in buying or selling, any weights, measures, scales, beams or other instruments used for weighing or measuring, which shall have been inspected and condemned by the sealer of weights and measures, or which, upon examination, shall not be conformable to the standards in the office of the sealer of weights and measures; or any person who shall violate, or fail to comply with, any of the foregoing provisions of this Act, shall be punished by a fine not to exceed one hundred dollars and cost of prosecution; and the court may make a further sentence that the offender be imprisoned in the District jail till the payment of such fine and costs: *Provided*, That such imprisonment shall not exceed the period of six months.

### SALE OF COAL.

SEC. 12. \*That no person shall sell, or deliver, any coal, or coke, within the limits of the District of Columbia unless at the time of the delivery thereof to the person in charge of the wagon, cart, or other vehicle or conveyance used for and in the delivery thereof, a written or printed certificate duly signed by or for the seller, showing

separately the actual weights of said coal, or coke, and the name of the purchaser thereof, and the weight of said wagon, cart, or other vehicle or conveyance, and showing the total weight of said coal, coke, wagon, cart, or other vehicle, or conveyance. And any person who shall violate or neglect or refuse to comply with the provisions of this section shall be punished by a fine of not more than forty dollars: *Provided*, That all prosecutions under this Act shall be brought in the police court of the District of Columbia on information filed by the corporation counsel or one of his assistants.

SEC. 13. That no person in charge of the wagon or conveyance used in delivering coal, to whom the certificate mentioned in section twelve of this Act has been delivered, shall neglect or refuse to exhibit such certificate to the sealer or the assistant sealer of weights and measures, or to any person designated by them, or to the purchaser or intended purchaser of the coal being delivered; and when said officers, person so designated, or such purchaser or intended purchaser shall demand that the weight shown by such certificate be verified, it shall be the duty of the person delivering such coal to convey the same forthwith to some public scale of the District, or to any private scale the owner whereof shall consent to such use, and to permit the verifying of the weight shown, and shall, after the delivery of such coal, return forthwith, with the wagon or conveyance used, to the same scale and verify the weight of the wagon or conveyance.

SEC. 14. That it shall be the duty of the sealer of weights and measures to inspect, or cause to be inspected and tested, the weight of coal sold or delivered as aforesaid within the District of Columbia, and to take the proceedings necessary to enforce the provisions of this Act.

SEC. 15. That any person who shall violate or who shall neglect or refuse to comply with the provisions of sections six, seven, and eight of this Act, or any person who shall deliver or attempt to deliver coal of less weight than that set down in the certificate hereinbefore mentioned, shall be punished with a fine not to exceed one hundred dollars and costs of prosecution; and the court may make a further sentence that the offender be imprisoned in the District jail until the payment of such fine and costs: *Provided*, That the term of such imprisonment shall not exceed six months.

SEC. 16. That all laws and ordinances inconsistent with the provisions of this Act be, and the same are hereby, repealed.

Approved, March 2, 1895.

#### WEIGHT OF BUSHEL OF POTATOES.

That when potatoes are sold by weight the lawful weight of a bushel of potatoes shall be sixty pounds, under a penalty of five dollars for each offense, to be recovered in the police court of the District of Columbia, in the name of the said District, in the same manner as other fines and penalties are recovered.

Approved, May 30, 1896.

## LEGAL WEIGHT OF A TON OF COAL.

That the legal standard ton of coal in the District of Columbia shall be two thousand two hundred and forty pounds. \* \* \*

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## SUPERVISION OF DISTRICT MARKETS, MARKET MASTERS, PUBLIC SCALES, WEIGHMASTERS, INSPECTORS, AND FISH WHARF RIGHTS AND PRIVILEGES.

Under orders of the Commissioners of the District of Columbia, September 29, 1902; June 12, 1903, and February 15, 1904, the inspectors of lumber, wood, and flour, and the commissioners of flour inspections, D. C. markets and market masters, public hay scales, weighmasters, and the fish wharf rights and privileges were placed under the immediate supervision of the Superintendent of weights and measures, through whom all reports and recommendations are made to the Commissioners.

## CHARCOAL.

All charcoal sold in the city shall be sold by measure or measures,\* the shape of which shall be fixed by the Mayor (Commissioners) and sealed by the sealer of weights and measures; and any person selling or offering charcoal for

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\*2,000 lbs., when sold by weight, constitute a ton—*Opinion of Corporation Counsel 1905.*

sale in any other than a prescribed sealed measure shall forfeit and pay five dollars for each offense, to be recovered as other fines are.

Webb's Digest, page 85.

## GENERAL INFORMATION CONCERNING WEIGHTS AND MEASURES.

### LIQUID MEASURE.

The United States standard unit for liquid measure is the gallon = 231 cubic inches = 8.33 + pounds of the standard pounds avoirdupois of distilled water. The quart contains 57.75 cubic inches.

### DRY MEASURE.

The United States standard unit for dry measure is the old English Winchester bushel and contains 2,150.42 cubic inches or 77.62+ pounds of the standard pound avoirdupois of distilled water. The dry quart contains 67.2+ cubic inches.

The heaped bushel, the cone of which is 6 inches above the brim of the measure, contains 2,747.7 cubic inches.

NOTE.—The heaped bushel is used for all kinds of vegetables, ear corn, coal, coak, and charcoal when sold by the bushel.

### MEASUREMENTS REQUIRED FOR LEGAL CORN BARREL.

Diameter at center.....	23 $\frac{3}{4}$ inches.
Diameter at top.....	19 $\frac{1}{2}$ inches.
Diameter at bottom.....	19 $\frac{1}{2}$ inches.
Depth .....	28 $\frac{3}{4}$ inches.
Diameter at angle.....	34 $\frac{3}{4}$ inches.

AVERAGE NUMBER OF BUSHELS OF ANTHRACITE COAL  
TO THE TON.

Shamokin.....	32
Lykins Valley.....	32
Red ash.....	30
Chesnut.....	28
Stove.....	28
Pea .....	28
Egg .....	28
Furnace .....	28

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A cart measuring 42 cubic feet holds an average ton of coal (2,240 lbs.).

One-ton coal cart holds  $\frac{1}{4}$  cord wood.

One-ton coal cart, with rack, holds  $\frac{1}{2}$  cord wood.

One-ton coal cart, with rack, holds one ton (2,000 lbs.) coke.

MEASUREMENTS OF CORD WOOD.

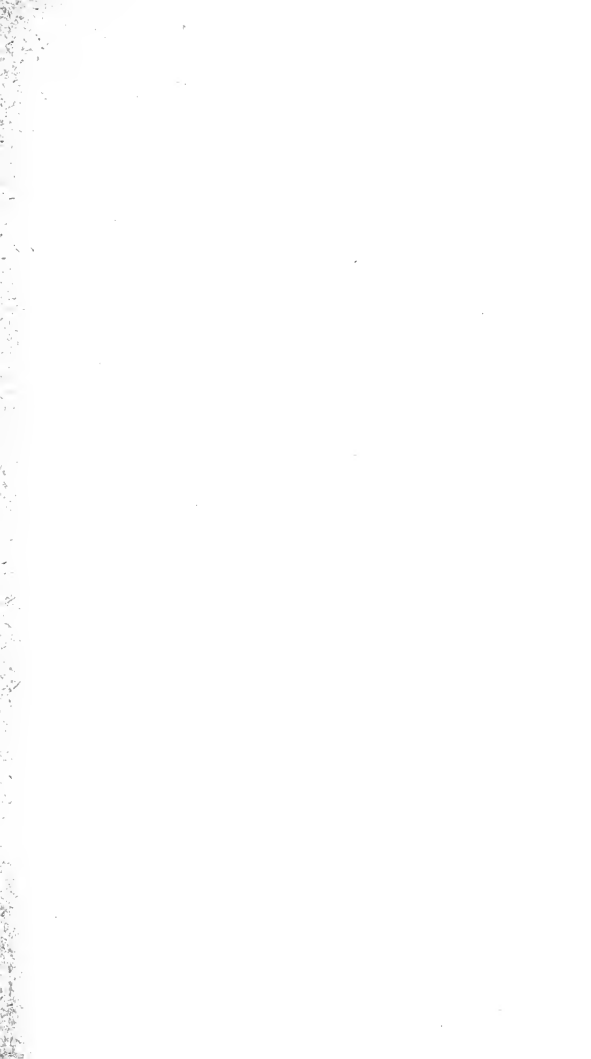
A legal cord of wood in the District of Columbia is 8 feet long, 4 feet wide, and 4 feet high, and contains 128 cubic feet.

NOTE.—From 153 to 160 cubic feet of sawed and split wood, thrown in loosely, is the product of a cord of wood; 153 cubic feet is a fair average. If racked-up the product should be from 112 to 120 cubic feet; 115 cubic feet is a fair average.



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