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SUGGESTED IMPROVEMENTS IN CHART TABLES.

By Lieutenant JOHN MARX, R.N.

THE chart tables, as at present supplied to the smaller classes of H.M. ships which are without chart houses, are the source of much annoyance. They leak in wet weather, and are thus the cause of many charts being spoilt, an important matter when on a long cruise, in intricate navigation on distant stations, where charts cannot be replaced. At night the table is generally lighted by a ship's lantern, the bottom of which is not always clean, and which when the ship is rolling is apt to upset, and then the grease running over the chart does not improve it, to say nothing of the fact that the table on a bridge is generally the handiest place to put down a sextant or a cup of cocoa for a minute; these and other small things thoughtlessly placed on it soon tend to make a chart illegible. Even fair wear and tear soon spoil a chart, the pencil marks of previous days have to be erased, and in doing this, the finer markings of the chart are apt to be rubbed off.

Hands and instruments are often unavoidably not as dry and clean as they should be, and a great object would be gained if all the pencil marks and other work could be done on a transparent surface laid on and fitting close down to the chart. Such a surface can be obtained by laying a large sheet of ground glass fitted in flush with the upper edge of a strong wooden frame, and kept in its place by metal clamps at the corners, thus allowing the rulers a chance of working over the edges without being continually shifted. The surface on which the chart is laid must be flat, so as to allow the glass to rest evenly on it, this can be secured by making the table after the fashion of a drawing board with strong battens at the back to prevent warping. The wet can be kept out by bringing the edges of the frame holding the ground glass, well below the surface of the table on which the chart rests. A stout wooden cover hinged on at the back to protect the glass when not in use, and a drawer underneath for the safe custody of the instruments, would complete a useful form of chart table calculated to prolong the life of the charts, and to save the navigating Officer much trouble when working in the rain or near the side of his chart.