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## THE AGE OF PLASTICS

Webster's dictionary defines plastic as "capable of being molded or modeled." Quite recently the term "plastics" has been adopted to cover a great new industry that is fast entering every corner of modern life, from kitchen to office, from factory to palace.

Celluloid, Bakelite, Pyralin, Catalin, Lucite, Plastacele and many other substances belonging to this vast group of new products have become indispensable to 20th century civilization. In the interiors of buildings and ships plastics have replaced iron and wood. In our homes they decorate the house, insulate electric appliances and supply heatproof handles for pots and kettles. Our combs and buttons are made of plastic; father smokes a pipe with a plastic mouthpiece, and uses a plastic ash tray when mother watches him; and the windows in the car are safe only because a thin sheet of a cellulose plastic cemented between two sheets of glass makes them shatterproof. In fact a list of all the products made of plastic material would make a sizable book.

Since 1873, when the Celluloid Manufacturing Company moved to Newark from Albany, New Jersey has been active in the production of plastics. In 1936 the value of plastics produced in New Jersey was \$15,000,000, about one-third of the output of the entire nation. Large producers that have followed the lead of the Celluloid Corporation in the manufacturing of various types of plastics are the DuPont Company in Arlington, the Luzerne Rubber Company at Trenton, the Naugatuck Chemical Division of the United States Rubber Company, Passaic, the Richardson Company, New Brunswick, and the Bakelite Corporation which in 1910 set up a factory at Perth Amboy and now has two large plants, one in Bound Brook and another in Bloomfield.

Civilization has progressed as man has learned to adapt materials of the three natural kingdoms; animal, vegetable and mineral, to his needs. Down through the centuries he learned to till the fields, domesticate animals, utilize metals, the power of the wind and the water. More recently, in the 19th century, man's ingenuity enabled him to turn the wheels of great engines by harnessing steam, electricity, oil and gas.

All this had been done with the materials supplied by Nature. The metals came from the earth. Water too was a gift. Fire burned only because of oxygen in the air.

In the middle of the 19th century, however, there developed a shortage of certain natural products. There was not enough amber for combs and ornaments,