

STORIES of New Jersey

kindred products, a slightly different process is used. Instead of forming sheets of the plastic by molding or stamping, the resinoid is made in the form of a varnish. Into this liquid is dipped either paper or cloth. When many coats have been applied and dried, the stiffened cloth or paper is cut to the required size, and placed in layers one on top of the other. These are pressed together under terrific pressure and heat, and the whole mass solidifies into one sheet. This is called a laminated plastic because it is built of layers. It is much tougher than a plain plastic sheet would be because the cloth or paper acts as a reinforcement.

Strangely enough the plastic industry got its greatest stimulus during the business depression. Manufacturers everywhere were losing money, and needed new products to stimulate sales. Newer, more durable and more beautiful plastics made their appearance in almost every conceivable shape. The "Gadget" industry called on the plastics chemists to find new materials for ash trays, cigarette holders, automobile accessories, ornamental jewelry, scouffless heels and countless other small items that are bought in great quantities.

Industries that had existed for years without using plastics began to employ them in an effort to brighten their wares. A large manufacturer of grocery scales found that his salesmen had to be brawny as well as brainy to demonstrate their ware. Some of the counter scales weighed as much as 165 pounds. A new plastic called Plaskon, one of the urea-formaldehyde resins, was invented to take the place of metal. Beside cutting the weight of the scales from 165 pounds to 55 pounds Plaskon, which is made in bright colors, has been extended to include poker chips, buttons, boxes, radio cabinets and frames.

Other recent plastic products are: Catalin, a phenol-formaldehyde resin made in many colors for buckles, beads, chessmen, etc.; Lumarith, a cellulose acetate used in making non-inflammable motion picture film, and Lucite, a highly transparent plastic so strong that it can be readily carved for ornamental use.

Some of the transparent cellulose plastics are being applied experimentally to make optical lenses and lenses for automobile lights. Headlights of this material have been devised to avoid the defects of others that blind drivers.

In Washington, the new Library of Congress contains \$100,000 worth of Bakelite laminated plastics, used both for decoration and utility. A comparable sum was spent on plastics for the de luxe staterooms on the new British liner Queen Mary.

The work of improving and inventing plastics goes on. The field is almost unlimited. Even the inventors cannot foresee all of the new uses to be found for their products. It is possible that plastic houses will be built before many years; or that some article, hitherto undreamed of, will be placed on the market and revolutionize modern life.