

SPIDERS IN BUSINESS

SPIDERWEBS are now being sold—and are making one resourceful Frenchman a rich man. Pierre Grantaire furnishes spiders for distribution in the wine vaults of the French merchants. His trade is chiefly with the wholesale merchant, who is able to stock a cellar with new shining, freshly labeled bottles and in three months see them veiled in filmly cobwebs, thus securing the effect of twenty years of storage. The impression upon a customer can be imagined.

It is a trifling matter to spray the bins with dust, but cobwebs spun from cork to cork to reproduce the seal of years of slow mellowing and fruition—that's where M. Grantaire comes in.

He has what he calls a spider room where he raises the little creatures. There are about four thousand spiders in the room, all raising large families. Then in special nests he keeps at least ten thousand old and young spiders in stock for immediate shipment. These spiders require special care and attention and must be watched closely because when hungry enough they are inclined to be cannibalistic.

A customer calls or writes; he is a wine merchant from some large city, who says he has just stocked a cellar with some five-year-old wines. The bottles have been brushed clean in shipping; they look like new and will not sell for old wine. The merchant has attached to them labels of twenty or thirty years past, some year of a "grand vintage." He tells M. Grantaire the number of bottles in the order.

The owner of the spider farm soon figures out how many of his pets will be needed to cover the merchant's cellar in cobwebs of the finest variety. He selects his spiders, packs them in boxes, and ships them off. The price is about fifteen or twenty dollars a hundred.

In two or three months the dealer's cellar looks as though it had not been disturbed for twenty or thirty years. It may have cost the dealer a tidy sum to buy all these weavers but the wines in their spider-spun old robes bring returns that well repay him for his investment.—*From The Commentator.*