

The size of a room is always estimated by the number of mats it contains. The mats are about two and a half inches thick, woven of straw, and covered with a very durable grass cloth that looks well and is easily kept clean. The edges are frequently bound around with a strip of figured cloth, which is a pleasant relief to the eye. The parlour is always situated at the back of the house, looking out into the garden, which is ever a model of neatness, variety, and beauty—a perfect landscape, with water, bridges, trees, hills, rocks, and, where a running stream can be had, stocked with gold and silver perch. There is no furniture save the charcoal brazier, which in cold weather supplies the place of a stove, a sword-rack, a few vases of flowers on a raised platform in a recess at one end of the room, and in some cases a small writing table, about eight or ten inches high. The walls are finished in tinted plaster, or papered; the ceiling is made of thin boards, dressed to show perfectly the natural grain of the wood. Pictures, specimens of handwriting, poems, in the form of long scrolls on rollers, adorn the walls. Chairs have been recently introduced, and are becoming quite common.

We are politely requested to be seated, or, if we may express it in the native idiom, *O kake nasai*—"Be so good as to hang yourself." A chair is called a *koshi kake*—a hip hanger. They wonder how we can endure to sit with the feet hanging down, and we are equally surprised to see with how little inconvenience they can sit on their heels. The family room is usually furnished with closets, chests of drawers, and a small table. The partitions are formed of light wooden frames covered with paper, sliding in grooves, and removable at pleasure, so that the house can be quickly made into one room, or divided into many. At night wadded quilts are brought out of the closets and spread on the mats—little blocks of wood with small rolls of rice chaff on them serve for pillows, and with a quilt or large wadded gown for covering the bed is furnished. In the morning all is put away again in the closet. By this wonderful economy of space a small house is sufficient for a large family.

The kitchen is often in the front of the house, and usually contains a good deal of inexpensive but very useful furniture. On a simple range hot water is always kept ready; in the morning, rice for the day is boiled in a large pot, never used for any other purpose, over a quick fire of wood. It is then put into a