from his towering height, and the hungry courtiers were all on the look-out for the spoil, the king granted the abbey estates to William Brereton, a gentleman of the Privy Chamber, who, like other sharers of Henry's favours, had better have been quit of his royal generosity, for two years afterwards he was executed on the false charge of an adulterous intercourse with Anne Boleyn. Sir Ralph Sadler, who owed his rise at court to Lord Cromwell, verifying the old adage that, "'Tis a great help to have a lord our friend," was Brereton's successor to these estates; and he was more fortunate than Cromwell, inasmuch as he kept his head after attaining the dangerous eminence of a secretary of state. Possibly his security lay in not intermeddling in the questions arising out of the matrimonial alliances of the king. The ablest of Henry's ministers rose and fell according to the part they played in reference to this regal butcher's wives. Sir Ralph Sadler appears to have steered clear of the rock on which the fortunes of less cautious statesmen split. He passed too through the religious dangers of the period, not only unscathed, but the gainer of a pardon from the Court of Rome, not for his own sins alone, but *the sins of his family for three generations!* and—what the shrewd statesman doubtless thought of more value—of vast estates, derived from the plundered abbeys and monasteries, although one of his maxims appears to have been that "reward should not empty the king's coffers, neither should riches be the pay of worth, which are merely the wages of labour." The reign of Mary passed by, leaving him minus only his office of clerk of the hamper, which was compensated for in the succeeding reign by his employment in services of the highest trust and importance, the most unthankful of which was the repugnant office forced upon him in his old age of gaoler to the unfortunate Queen of Scots. One of our old writers sums up the prudential qualities of Sir Ralph Sadler in the following eulogy:—"He saw the interest of the state altered six times, and died an honest man; the crown put upon four heads, yet he continued a faithful subject; religion changed, as to the public constitution of it, five times, yet he kept his faith." From Sir Ralph Sadler the manor of Lesnes passed to one descendant and another, until it came into the possession of Sir John Hippisley.

This gentleman was a courtier of the reign of Charles I., and the bearer of the fatal news of Buckingham's assassination at Portsmouth to the king. Charles was but four miles distant at the time, and when Sir John arrived was engaged at public prayers. The courtier, however, big with the important intelligence he had to communicate, hastened up to the royal closet, and whispered in the king's ear the painful news. Charles made no reply, but allowed the service to proceed to its close, when he hurried out, and throwing himself on his bed, gave way to the most violent grief. A day or two after he issued orders for a magnificent funeral, the expense of which would have exceeded £40,000; but being advised that this vain display would only tend to increase the popular indignation, then raging in full force against the memory of the departed minister, the orders were countermanded. Charles next bethought him of a handsome monument, to perpetuate the memory of his attachment to his deceased favourite; but one of his friends whispering in his ear that his father, King James, had not yet been thus honoured, this design was likewise abandoned, and it was left to history alone to commemorate—

> "His means of death; his obscure funeral.
> No trophy, sword, nor hatchment o'er his bones,
> No noble rite, nor funeral ostentation,
> Cry to be heard!"

After passing through various hands, the property, towards the end of the seventeenth century, was settled on Christ's Hospital, which institution its rents now go to support.

The fields in the marshes near Abbey Wood in olden times, of course, belonged to Lesnes Abbey, and in right of them the abbot of that convent, in the reign of Edward I., put forward a claim, though unsuccessfully, to all wrecks of the sea that might be washed up by the Thames within this manor. Perhaps it would have been as well if the worthy monks had kept a better watch on the repairs of their river banks instead of looking after such chance arrivals: for, as stated above, the Thames broke in upon the marshes of Plumstead and Erith, and laid them under water for many a long year. Tax after tax was levied to rescue these lands back again; and after twelve years of unceasing labour the monks recovered the whole, as Hasted remarks, "to their no small benefit." The war of man against the forces of nature was not settled, however, in a single battle; and many years elapsed before the Thames was fairly and finally compelled to retire within its own domain.

What is left of the abbey ruins is of no architectural or picturesque value. The site of the Abbey Grange is marked by Abbey Farm, on the hillside overlooking the marsh, a tasteless modern building raised on the old foundation. The wood was at one time free and open, so that sketchers, botanists, and others might roam about in it at their own sweet will; but now the wood is in part