King John and the Abbot of Canterbury

1) An ancient story I'll tell you anon,
2) Of a notable prince, that was called
3) King John;
4) He ruled over England with main and might,
1) But he did great wrong,
4) And maintained little right.
1) And I'll tell you a story,
4) A story so merry,
3) Concerning the Abbot of Canterbury;
1) How for his housekeeping and high renown,
3) They rode post to bring him
1) To London town.
3,4) A hundred men
1) As the king heard say,
3) The Abbot kept in his house everyday;
1) And fifty gold chains,
4) Without any doubt,
1) In velvet coats, waited the abbot about.
2) "How now, Father Abbot? I hear it of thee,
2) Thou keepest a far better house than me;
2) And for thy housekeeping and high renown,
1,2,4) I fear thou work'st treason
2) Against my crown."
3) "My liege,"
1) Quoth the Abbot,
3) "I would it were known,
3) I am spending nothing but what is my own;
3) And I trust your grace will not put me in fear,
3) For spending my own true-gotten gear."
2) "Yes, yes, Father Abbot, Thy fault is high,
2) And now for the same thou needest must die;
2) For unless thou canst answer my questions three,
2) Thy head struck off from thy body shall be."
2) "Now first,"
1) Quoth the King,
2) With my crown of gold on my head so fair,
2) Among all my liegemen of noble birth,
2) Tell to one penny, what I am worth."
4) "For thirty pence, our Savior was sold,
4) Among the Romans as I have been told;
4) And twenty-nine is the worth of thee,
4) For I think thou are one penny worse than he."

All) The king, he laughed,
1) And swore by Saint Bittle,
All) "I did not think I was worth so little!
2) Now secondly tell me, beyond all doubt,
2) How quickly I may ride the whole world about."
4) "You must rise with the sun, and ride with the same,
4) Until the next morning he riseth again;
4) And then your Grace need never doubt
4) But in twenty-four hours you'll ride it about."
All) The King he did say,
1) And swore by Saint June,
All) "I'll make thee Lord Abbot this day in his place!"
4) "Now, nay, my liege, be not in such speed;
4) For I can neither write nor read."
All) "For nobles a week, then I'll give to thee,
All) That am come to beg pardon for him and for me."
All) The king he laughed,
1) And swore by our Grace;
All) "I'll make thee Lord Abbot this day in his place!"
4) "Now, nay, my liege, be not in such speed;
4) For I can neither write nor read."
All) "For nobles a week, then I'll give to thee,
All) That am come to beg pardon for him and for me."
All) Thou hast brought a free pardon from good King John."