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Völuspá (Prophecy of the Volva, Prophecy of the Seeress) is the first and best known poem of the Poetic Edda. It tells the story of the creation of the world and its coming end related by a völva or seeress addressing Odin. It is one of the most important primary sources for the study of Norse mythology. The poem is preserved whole in the Codex Regius and Hauksbók manuscripts while parts of it are quoted in the Prose Edda. This is Olive Bray's English translation.

1. Hearing I ask all holy kindreds,
high and low-born, sons of Heimdal!
Thou too, Odin, who bidst me utter
the oldest tidings of men that I mind!

(The World's Beginning.)

2. I remember of yore were born the Jotuns,
they who aforetime fostered me:
nine worlds I remember, nine in the Tree,
the glorious Fate Tree that springs 'neath the Earth.

3. 'Twas the earliest of times when Ymir lived;

then was sand nor sea nor cooling wave,
nor was Earth found ever, nor Heaven on high,
there was Yawning of Deeps and nowhere grass:

4. ere the sons of the god had uplifted the world-plain,
and fashioned Midgarth, the glorious Earth.
Sun shone from the south, on the world's bare stones
then was Earth o'crgrown with herb of green.

5. Sun, Moon's companion, out of the south
her right hand flung round the rim of heaven.
Sun knew not yet where she had her hall;
nor knew the stars where they had their place;
nor ever the Moon what might he owned.

(Ordering of Times and Seasons.)

6. Then went all the Powers to their thrones of doom
the most holy gods and o'er this took counsel:
to Night and the New-Moons names they gave:
they named the Morning, and named the Mid-day,
Afternoon, Evening, to count the years.

(The Golden Age Till the Coming of Fate.)

7. Gathered the gods on the Fields of Labour;
they set on high their courts and temples;
they founded forges, wrought rich treasures,
tongs they hammered and fashioned tools.

8. They played at tables in court, were joyous,
little they wanted for wealth of gold.
Till there came forth three of the giant race,
all fearful maidens, from Jotunheim.

(Creation of the Dwarfs.)

9. Then went all the Powers to their thrones of doom,
the most holy gods, and o'er this took counsel:
whom should they make the lord of dwarfs
out of Ymir's blood, and his swarthy limbs.

10. Mead-drinker then was made the highest,
but Durin second of all the dwarfs;
and out of the earth these twain-shaped beings
in form like man, as Durin bade.

11. New Moon, Waning-moon, All-thief, Dallier,
North and South and East and West.
Corpse-like, Death-like, Niping, Damn,
Bifur, Bafur, Bombur, Nori,
Ann and Onar, Al, Mead-wolf.

12. Vigg and Wand-elf, Wind-elf, Thrai'nn,
Thekk and Thorin, Thrór, Vit, and Lit,
Nyr and Regin, New-counsel, Wise-counsel,
now have I numbered the dwarfs aright.

13. Fili, Kili, Fundin, Nali,
Heptifili, Hannar, Sviur,
Frar, Hornbori, Fraeg and Loni,
Aurvang, Jari, Oaken-shield.

14. 'Tis time to number in Dallier's song-mead
all the dwarf-kind of Lofar's race,
who from earth's threshold, the Plains of Moisture,
sought below the Sandy-realms.

15. There were Draupnir and Dolgthrasir,

Har and Haugspori, Hlevang, Gloin,
Dori, Ori, Duf, Andvari,
Skirfir, Virfir, Skafid, Ai.

16. Elf and Yngvi, Oaken-shield,
Fjalar and Frost, Fin and Ginar.
Thus shall be told throughout all time
the line who were born of Lofar's race.

(Creation of Men.)

17. Then came three gods of the jEsir kindred,
mighty and blessed, towards their home.
They found on the seashore, wanting power,
with fate unwoven, an Ash and Elm.

18. Spirit they had not, and mind they owned not,
blood, nor voice nor fair appearance.
Spirit gave Odin, and mind gave Honir,
blood gave Lodur, and aspect fair.

(The Tree of Life and Fate.)

19. An ash I know standing, 'tis called Yggdrasil,
a high tree sprinkled with shining drops;
come dews therefrom which fall in the dales;
it stands ever green o'er the well of Weird.

20. There are the Maidens, all things knowing,
three in the hall which stands 'neath the Tree.
One is named ' Weird,' the second ' Being'
who grave on tablets but ' Shall ' the third.
They lay down laws, they choose out life,
they speak the doom of the sons of men.

(The War of the Gods.)

21. I remember the first great war in the world,
when Golden-draught they pierced with spears,
and burned in the hall of Odin the High One;
thrice they burned her, the three times born,
oft, not seldom yet still she lives.

22. Men called her 'Witch,' when she came to their dwellings,
flattering seeress ; wands she enchanted,
spells many wove she, light-hearted wove them,
and of evil women was ever the joy.

23. Then went all the Powers to their thrones of doom,
the most holy gods, and o'er this took counsel:
whether the JEsir should pay a were-gild
and all Powers together make peaceful offering.

24. But Odin hurled and shot 'mid the host;
and still raged the first great war in the world.
Broken then were the bulwarks of Asgard,
the Waness, war wary, trampled the field.

(War with the Jotuns.)

25. Then went all the Powers to their thrones of doom,
the most holy gods, and o'er this took counsel:
who all the air had mingled with poison
and Freyja had yielded to the race of Jotuns.

26. Alone fought the Thunderer with raging heart
seldom he rests when he hears such tidings.
Oaths were broken, words and swearing,
all solemn treaties made betwixt them.

(The Secret Pledges of the Gods.)

27. I know where Heimdal's hearing is hidden
under the heaven-wont holy tree,
which I see ever showered with falling streams
from All-father's pledge. Would ye know further, and what?

28. I sat lone enchanting when came the Dread One,
the ancient god, and gazed in my eyes:
' What dost thou ask of me? why dost thou prove me?

29. All know I, Odin, yea, where thou hast hidden
thine eye in the wondrous well of Mimir,
who each morn from the pledge of All-father
drinks the mead " Would ye know further, and what?

30. Then Odin bestowed on me rings and trinkets
for magic spells and the wisdom of wands.
I saw far and wide into every world.

31. From far I saw the Valkyries coming
ready to ride to the hero host.
Fate held a shield, and Lofty followed
War and Battle, Bond and Spearpoint.
Numbered now are the Warfather's maidens,
Valkyries, ready to ride o'er Earth.

32. I saw for Baldr, the bleeding god,
the child of Odin, his doom concealed.
High o'er the fields, there stood upgrown,
most slender and fair, the mistletoe.

33. And there came from that plant,

though slender it seemed,
the fell woe-shaft which Hod did shoot.
But Baldr's brother was born ere long;
that son of Odin fought one night old;

34. for never hand he bathed, nor head,
ere he laid on the bale-fire Baldr's foe.
But Frigg long wept o'er the woe of Valholl
in Fen's moist halls Would ye know further, and what?

(Vision into Hel and Jotunheim.)

35. I saw lying bound in Cauldron-grove
one like the form of guile-loving Loki.
And there sat Sigyn, yet o'er her husband
rejoicing little. Would ye know further, and what?

36. From the eastward a flood, the Stream of Fear,
bore swords and daggers through Poison-dales.

37. To the northward stood on the Moonless Plains,
the golden hall of the Sparkler's race;
and a second stood in the Uncooled realm,
a feast-hall of Jotuns, ' Fire,' 'tis called:

38. and far from the sun I saw a third
on the Strand of Corpses, with doors set northward:
down through the roof dripped poison-drops,
for that hall was woven with serpents' backs.

39. I saw there wading the whelming streams
wolf-like murderers, men forsworn,
and those who another's love-whisperer had wiled.
The dragon, Fierce-stinger, fed on corpses,

a wolf tore men. Would ye know further, and what?

40. Far east in Iron-wood sat an old giantess,
Fenrir's offspring she fostered there.

From among them all doth one come forth,
in guise of a troll, to snatch the sun.

41. He is gorged, as on lives of dying men;
he reddens the place of the Powers like blood.
Swart grows the sunshine of summer after,
all baleful the storms. Would ye know further, and what?

(Signs of Doom.)

42. Sits on a mound and strikes his harp
the gleeful Swordsman, warder of giant-wives;
o'er him crows in the roosting tree
the fair red cock who Fjalar is called.

43. Crows o'er the gods the Golden-combed;
he wakes the heroes in War-father's dwellings;
and crows yet another beneath the earth,
a dark red cock in the halls of Hel.

44. Loud bays Garm before Gaping- Hel;
the bond shall be broken the Wolf run free.
Hidden things I know ; still onward I see
the great Doom of the Powers, the gods of war.

45. Brothers shall fight and be as murderers;
sisters' children shall stain their kinship.
'Tis ill with the world ; comes fearful whoredom,
a Sword age, Axe age, shields are cloven,
a Wind age, Wolf age, ere the world sinks.

Never shall man then spare another.

46. Mim's sons arise ; the Fate Tree kindles
at the roaring sound of Gjalla-horn.

Loud blows Heimdal, the horn is aloft,
and Odin speaks with Mimir's head.

47. Groans the Ancient Tree, Fenrir is freed,
shivers, yet standing, Yggdrasil's ash.

48. How do the gods fare, how do the elves fare?
All Jotunheim rumbles, the gods are in council;
before the stone doors the dwarfs are groaning,
a rock-wall finding Would ye know further, and what?

49. Loud bays Garm before Gaping-hel:
the bond shall be broken, the Wolf run free.
Hidden things I know ; still onward I see
the great Doom of the Powers, the gods of war.

(Gathering of the Destroyers.)

50. Drives Hrym from the East holding shield on high;
the World-serpent writhes in Jotun-rage;
he lashes the waves ; screams a pale-beaked eagle,
rending corpses, the Death boat is launched.

51. Sails the bark from the North ; the hosts of Hel
o'er the sea are coming, and Loki steering,
brother of Byleist, he fares on the way
with Fenrir and all the monster kinsmen.

52. Rides Surt from the South fire, bane of branches,
sun of the war gods, gleams from his sword.

The rock-hills crash, the troll-wives totter,
men flock Helward, and heaven is cleft.

(The Last Battles of the Gods.)

53. Soon comes to pass Frigg's second woe,
when Odin fares to fight with the wolf;
then must he fall, her lord beloved,
and Beli's bright slayer must bow before Surt.

54. Comes forth the stalwart son of the War-father,
Vidar, to strive with the deadly beast;
lets he the sword from his right hand leap
into Fenrir's heart, and avenged is the father.

55. Comes forth the glorious offspring of Earth,
Thor, to strive with the glistening Serpent.

56. Strikes in his wrath the Warder of Midgard,
while mortals all their homes forsake;
nine feet recoils he, the son of Odin,
bowed, from the dragon who fears not shame.

(The End of the World.)

57. The sun is darkened, Earth sinks in the sea,
from heaven turn the bright stars away.
Rages smoke with fire, the life-feeder,
high flame plays against heaven itself.

58. Loud bays Garm before Gaping-hel,
the bond shall be broken, the Wolf run free;
hidden things I know ; still onward I see
the great Doom of the Powers, the gods of war.

(The New World.)

59. I see uprising a second time
earth from the ocean, green anew;
the waters fall, on high the eagle
flies o'er the fell and catches fish.

60. The gods are gathered on the Fields of Labour;
they speak concerning the great World Serpent,
and remember there things of former fame
and the Mightiest God's old mysteries.

61. Then shall be found the wondrous-seeming
golden tables hid in the grass,
those they had used in days of yore.

62. And there unsown shall the fields bring forth;
all harm shall be healed ; Baldr will come
Hod and Baldr shall dwell in Valholl,
at peace the war gods. Would ye know further, and what?

63. Then Honir shall cast the twigs of divining,
and the sons shall dwell of Odin's brothers
in Wind-home wide. Would ye know further, and what?

64. I see yet a hall more fair than the sun,
roofed with gold in the Fire-sheltered realm;
ever shall dwell there ' all holy beings,
blest with joy through the days of time.

(Coming of the New Power, Passing of the Old.)

65. Comes from on high to the great Assembly
the Mighty Ruler who orders all.

66. Fares from beneath a dim dragon flying,
a glistening snake from the Moonless Fells.
Fierce-stinger bears the dead on his pinions
away o'er the plains. I sink now and cease.

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