



FIG. 22.—Erian ferns (New Brunswick). A, *Aneimites obtusa*. C, *Neuropteris polymorpha*. F, *Sphenopteris pilosa*. N, *Hymenophyllum subfurcatum*.

Another group of plants which attained to great development in the Erian age is that of the Ferns or Brackens. The oldest of these yet known are found in the Middle Erian. The *Eopteris* of Sappora, from the Silurian, at one time supposed to carry this type much further back, has unfortunately been found to be a mere imitative form, consisting of films of pyrites of leaf-like shapes, and produced by crystallisation. In the Middle Erian, however, more especially in North America, many species have been found (Figs. 22 to 24).* I have myself recorded more than thirty species from the Middle Erian of Canada, and these belong to several of the genera found in the Carboniferous, though some are peculiar to the Erian. Of the latter, the best known are perhaps those of the genus *Archæopteris* (Fig. 24), so abundant in the plant-beds of Kiltorcan in Ireland, as well as in North America. In this genus the fronds are large and luxuriant, with broad obovate pinnules decurrent on the leaf-stalk, and with simple sac-like spore-cases borne on modified pinnæ. Another very beautiful fern found

* For descriptions of these ferns, see reports cited above.