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A.C. Seward (1863–1941) was an eminent English geologist and botanist who pioneered the study of palaeobotany. After graduating from St John's College, Cambridge, in 1886 Seward was appointed a University Lecturer in Botany in 1890. In 1898 he was elected a Fellow of the Royal Society, and was appointed Professor of Botany in 1906. These volumes, published to great acclaim between 1898 and 1919, provide a detailed discussion and study of an emerging science. In the early nineteenth century, research and critical literature concerning palaeobotany was scattered across disciplines. In these volumes Seward synthesised and revised this research and also included a substantial amount of new material. Furnished with concise descriptions of fossil plants, detailed figures and extensive bibliographies these volumes became the standard reference for palaeobotany well into the twentieth century. Volume 2, first published in 1910, contains systematic descriptions of fossil ferns.

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