

### Section iii. Cretaceous

The next great series of geological formations received the name of Cretaceous system, from the fact that, in north-western Europe, one of its most important members is a thick band of white chalk (*creta*). It presents very considerable lithological and palæontological differences as it is traced over the world. In particular, the white chalk is almost wholly confined to the Anglo-Parisian basin where the system was first studied. Probably no contemporaneous group of rocks presents more remarkable local differences than the Cretaceous system of Europe. These differences are the records of an increasing diversity of geographical conditions in the history of the Continent.

#### § 1. General Characters

**Rocks.**—In the European area, as will be afterward pointed out in more detail, two tolerably distinct areas of deposit can be recognized, each with its own character of sedimentary accumulations, as in the case of the Jurassic system already described. The northern tract includes Britain, the lowlands of central Europe southward into Silesia, Bohemia, and round the Ardennes into the basin of the Seine. The southern region embraces the centre and south of France, the range of the Alps, and the basin of the Mediterranean eastward into Asia. In the northern area, which appears to have been a basin in great measure shut off from free communication with the Atlantic, the deposits are largely of a littoral or shallow-water kind. The basement beds, usually sands or sandstones, sometimes conglom-