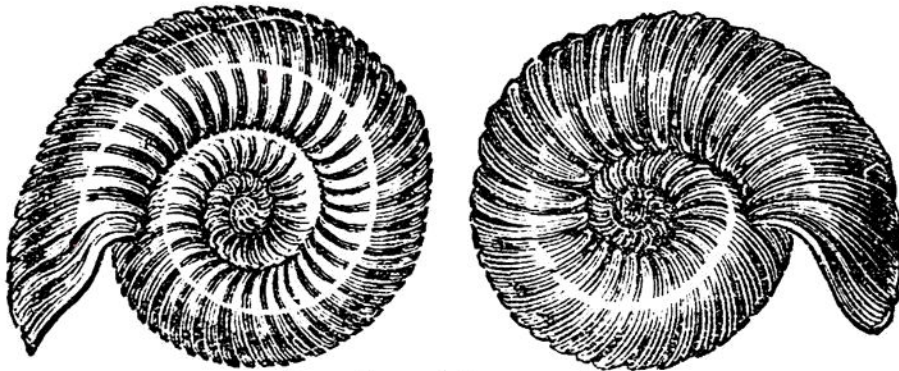


the support of these animals. But many of the animals, the remains of which are discovered imbedded in the mineral masses, are now extinct, so far as our knowledge of existing genera extends. The reptiles appear to have had, at one period, a great predominance over all other creatures, and many of them must have possessed forms and habits very different from any that are now known to be borne by animals of the same class.

If we look to those classes of animals known among naturalists as the mollusca and conchifera, we shall find that they also have been destroyed by the ravaging hand of time. Some of these have existed in vast numbers, as the multitudes that have escaped destruction and are preserved in the solid strata fully prove; and there are some genera, the Ammonite



Species of Ammonite.

for instance, that contained so many species as to give no slight trouble to the naturalist in his endeavour to find them names. To ascertain the exterminating process which has swept from the surface of the earth so many forms of being, may be a difficult task; there are, however, causes in the present day, independent of the destroying agency of man, tending to decrease the number of certain species; and animals known to be in existence a few years since are not now to be found. Many animals are distributed in localities, frequently of small extent, and any violent physical cause acting upon those spots might destroy the entire race. Australia appears to have a class of animals entirely its own; and should it, at any future period, suffer under one convulsion, similar in intensity to those which were common during the deposition of rocks, and be submerged, a large number of terrestrial animals would become extinct; while an elevation of the bed of the sea would be equally destructive to many marine animals.