lar phenomena. For instance, Church, speaking of the Akjas River in the eastern Tian Shan plateau, says in a matter-of-fact way: —

"I don't know how they cross it when the snow is melting in spring, but suppose that then the old plan of waiting for a few cloudy days has to be adopted."

The significance of all this for our present purpose lies in the fact that increased cloudiness, however caused, preserves ice and snow. It also prevents evaporation. If Asia, for instance, should, as a whole, become more cloudy, the result would be a series of phenomena practically identical with those which characterize fluvial epochs; and also practically identical with those which would ensue if the temperature of the country were lowered, or if the amount of rain and snow became larger. The size of glaciers would increase; the volume of springs and rivers would be larger and more uniform; lakes which have no outlet would expand; the soil would everywhere be moister; and vegetation would flourish in places which are now desert. We do not yet know whether fluvial epochs are due to greater cloudiness, heavier precipitation, or lower temperature — probably to all three. The question is of especial interest because of the diverse influence which changes of the three kinds would probably have upon the occupations and hence upon the history of man. We shall come to it again in another connection.

The main features of the bottom of the Shyok valley, in addition to the rough flood-plain, are terraces of gravel and talus, covered with fans whose fronts have been nipped off by the river. Behind them tower splendid cliffs, one or