NAPOLEON'S INVASION OF EGYPT AND THE LAW OF MASS ACTION. Dean F. Martin IES, Department of Chemistry, University of South Florida, 4202 E. Fowler Ave CHE 205, Tampa, FL 33620.

Some students may wonder how the Law of Mass Action came to be formulated. Generally those who teach chemical equilibrium lack the time or the information to cover the topic, but the background, as covered in historical perspectives of chemistry, seems interesting. When Napoleon Bonaparte embarked on this Egyptian venture in the late Eighteenth Century, he was accompanied a group of French savants, including a trusted advisor, Claude Louis Berthollet. Soon after landing, the French fleet was discovered by a British fleet, under Admiral Nelson, and as a result of the ensuing battle, the French force was stranded. But, during the course of his assignments, Berthollet discovered a unique nitron lake that provided remarkable insight and the ultimate development of the Law of Mass Action. Though the expedition was a military failure, it led to a chemistry breakthrough, as well as the discovery of the Rosetta Stone, and a major advancement of Egyptology.