

The Napoleon Series

The Duchy of Arenberg and the Dukes and Princes Who Fought during the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars, 1789-1815: Arenberg, Auguste-Marie-Raymond, Count of La Marck and Prince of

By [Daniel Clarke](#)

Auguste-Marie-Raymond a Prince of Arenberg and the Count of La Marck, was born on August 30, 1753 in the city of Brussels, capital of the Austrian Netherlands (Belgium). He was the second son of Charles-Marie-Raymond, 5th Duke of Arenberg and the 11th Duke of Aarschot, and his wife Louise-Marguerite of La Marck. Auguste was the younger brother of Louis-Engelbert—often known as “the Blind Duke”, due to a hunting accident that claimed his sight—who became the 6th Duke of Arenberg. In 1774 Auguste-Marie-Raymond married into a French noble family by taking Marie-Françoise-Augustine-Ursule le Danois, Marquise de Cernay, as his wife, and they had one son together. He is usually known as Ernest(-Engelbert), Prince d’Arenberg (1777-1857), and after his father fled to Vienna he joined the Austrian army where he rose to the rank of major, fighting at Marengo in 1800. In 1802 he resigned his commission and returned to Belgium, where in 1803 he became a French citizen. But in 1814, when the French were pushed out of the Low Countries, he joined the Allies becoming the figurehead colonel of a newly raised regiment, and was promoted to *generaal-majoor* later that year in the newly formed Dutch army.

Throughout his adult life Auguste-Marie-Raymond was known by the name Count of La Marck (*Comte de La Marck* in French), a title he inherited from his grandfather. This was because his grandfather, Louis-Engelbert, Count of La Marck, had produced no male heirs, and before his death made sure Auguste-Marie-Raymond would inherit his title and estates. Due to his inheritance he also became the owner of a German mercenary regiment in French service his uncle had raised, which was titled the La Marck Infantry Regiment. Before all of this came to pass, however, Auguste-Marie-Raymond received an education befitting his family’s status. He then travelled with his grandfather to the Austrian court at Vienna in the early 1770s as man in his 18th or 19th year, to get the permission of Empress Marie Theresa of Austria to serve in the French army. His grandfather believed that this was necessary as the House of Arenberg had always served Austria, both politically and militarily, as a member of the Holy Roman Empire, and wanted to seek the Empress’s approval to break this bond. They arrived in Vienna at the most opportune moment, as the Empress had recently agreed to allow her remaining daughter, Princess Maria Antonia Josepha Johanna, to marry Louis-Auguste, the Dauphin of France. Both of them will be more commonly known to the reader as King Louis XVI of France and Queen Marie Antoinette.

When he was presented to the Empress, the Dauphin of France and Princess Maria Antonia at the Austrian court, Auguste-Marie-Raymond made a very definite and positive impression upon them. The Dauphin in particular took a liking to the young noble from the Austrian Netherlands, and Auguste-Marie-Raymond accompanied him to many royal functions as they travelled to Paris after the arrangements for the marriage were finalised. Only a few months after arriving in Paris Auguste-Marie-Raymond's grandfather died, and he quickly assumed command of the La Marck Infantry Regiment as the Colonel-Propriétaire in 1773, with the rank of Colonel. As a very young officer of only 20 years of age, Auguste-Marie-Raymond travelled to his regiment's quarters in the south of France and remained there for the next year, learning the arts of war. He returned to Paris in 1774 when the Dauphin ascended the throne of France as King Louis XVI. Also during 1774 he married Marie-Françoise-Augustine-Ursule le Danois, Marquise de Cernay, whose family owned an estate in northern France near Valenciennes at Raismes. After his marriage Auguste-Marie-Raymond split his time between the royal court at Paris—where he was very popular due to his close relationship with the new royal couple—the estate he had gained at Raismes, and his infantry regiment.

This rather tranquil life was brought to an end at the end of 1781. His regiment was one of four assigned to the 1st Division of General Charles-Joseph-Patissier, Marquis de Bussy-Castelnau's expedition to India, after France had allied herself with the American colonies fighting for independence from Britain, and the Kingdom of Mysore. The convoy carrying the division left the port of Brest in December, collected de Bussy-Castelnau, who had gone to Cadiz, Spain, and headed to the island of Tenerife to re-supply. Travelling down the west coast of Africa the convoy came to Table Bay, part of the Dutch colony in southern Africa, where more supplies were taken aboard. Also a battalion of infantry was put ashore at the behest of the Dutch governor, who was afraid of a British attack. Finally in May 1782 Auguste-Marie-Raymond arrived at the Isle de France (Mauritius).

In the meantime, the French government had sent naval commander Vice Admiral Pierre André de Suffren and his squadron to the Indian Ocean much earlier in the year. His orders were to beat the British fleet of Admiral Edward Hughes, and create a safe passage for de Bussy-Castelnau's divisions to India. De Suffren's fleet engaged Hughes on a number of occasions in the Bay of Bengal throughout 1782, but did not inflict a telling defeat. Finally on September 3, 1782, when he had manoeuvred Hughes out of the harbour at Trinquemalay (Trincomalee, Sri Lanka), he defeated him. The defeated British fleet sailed to Bombay (Mumbai), while de Suffren remained at Trinquemalay to re-fit his ships and shelter them from the storms of the monsoon season.

While de Suffren cleared the British from the Indian Ocean, Auguste-Marie-Raymond and his regiment remained on the Isle de France six months. During this period the whole of the expeditionary force suffered terribly from fevers and disease. By the time de Suffren brought his fleet to the island to escort the convoy to India, the infantry had lost one third or more of its strength. After the delays it was only on March 16, 1783 that Auguste-Marie-Raymond landed in

India at Gondelour (Cuddalore Old Town), about 15 miles south of Pondichéry (Puducherry). Upon landing his single division in India, which amounted to no more than 2,500 men, de Bussy-Castelnau had some reorganising to do. His four regiments no longer had enough men to field the usual two regimental battalions, so each regiment was combined into a single battalion. He also split them into two, two regiment brigades, with Auguste-Marie-Raymond leading the 2nd Brigade. His brigade contained the single battalions of his La Marck regiment and the Aquitaine Infantry Regiment, and he was posted to the vicinity of Mangicoupan (Manjakuppam), where the army's hospital was located. When Admiral Hughes and the British fleet once again threatened the coast of east India in April, the army moved to a position between Gondelour and Pondichéry at Bahour.

The threat posed by Hughes was a false one. In fact a mixed British and East India Company army led by General James Stuart (17??-1793) was marching on Cuddalore from the direction of Porto-Novo (Parangipettai). Stuart's force of 4,000 British regulars and 12,000 Sepoys arrived outside Gondelour in the first week of June, but he delayed attacking the fortified town. This delay gave the French time to march from Bahour to take up positions opposite the British, just outside the southern walls of the town. Stuart still did not attack, which allowed the outnumbered French—who had a strength of only 2,200 regulars and 7,000 Mysorean allies—to throw up earthworks and two redoubts to strengthen their position. The Mysoreans held the right with their right flank resting on some hills, one of which was protected by a redoubt; the Aquitaine regiment was on their left; the La Marck regiment was held in reserve; and the 1st Brigade held the centre and left, with the left flank resting on the beach. The 1st Brigade was also responsible for holding another redoubt in the centre of the French line.

Stuart began his attack early on June 12, when he sent a column around the French right flank to attack the hilltop redoubt. The Mysoreans were quickly driven from the position and their counter-attack failed, as they were spooked when the British turned the several guns of the redoubt upon them. This column failed to capitalise on the circumstances, as Stuart's orders were that this was only a diversionary effort. To counter the threat the Aquitaine Infantry Regiment bent its line backwards to protect its exposed flank. Stuart then sent in his main effort of two columns against the French centre. The first column advanced ahead of the second through some woods of coconut trees, before coming upon the centre redoubt. The column was beaten back by discharges of canister and the heavy musketry of the defending Austraise Infantry Regiment. However, the French regiment then pursued the British into the woods, and when the second British column came up, it easily drove the disorganised French back to and beyond the redoubt, capturing it. It was at this point Auguste-Marie-Raymond seems to have taken the initiative. He brought up his La Marck Regiment and mounted a number of attacks on the captured redoubt. These attacks failed and in the process Auguste-Marie-Raymond sustained a minor wound to the chest.

During the night the French withdrew inside the fortified walls of Cuddalore, and both armies sat watching each other for the next week. On June 20 both de Suffren's and Hughes's squadrons were spotted off the coast, each with the

intention of re-supplying their respective land forces. After some manoeuvring the squadrons clashed on the 23rd, with de Suffren having the best of the fight forcing Hughes to withdraw. He landed the supplies he was carrying for de Bussy-Castelnau's men, which included stores of artillery ammunition and some infantry reinforcements from the much delayed 2nd Division. With these extra quantities of ordinance the French bombarded the British encampments, and the Mysorean's were given the task of harassing the camp from the forested hills to the west. On June 25 Hughes received the news that a peace agreement had been ratified in February 1783 between France and Britain, which meant hostilities had been over for nearly four months. He managed to inform de Suffren, who in turn told de Bussy-Castelnau, but he distrusted the information and so continued his bombardment of the British camps. On June 29 a French frigate sailed into Cuddalore harbour carrying official dispatches from the French war ministry, and these confirmed Hughes's and de Suffren's stories. Finally on July 2 the two sides officially ended hostilities.

Auguste-Marie-Raymond returned to France in early 1784 with de Suffren's squadron. While in India he had forgotten about an incident with one of his subordinate officers, who had resigned from the regiment rather than probably face a court-martial. The officer in question was a Swede named Peyron, who had the connections to have the support of Gustav III, King of Sweden. Peyron, still slighted by the incident, challenged Auguste-Marie-Raymond to a duel, which he accepted. They met at some point not long afterwards and chose swords as their weapons of choice. After some slices, parries and lunges, Auguste-Marie-Raymond somehow managed to strike Peyron in one of his eyes, with the sword blade entering his brain, killing him. However, Auguste-Marie-Raymond found he had been badly wounded as well, when he began to cough up blood. His doctors found that Peyron's sword had entered under an armpit and gone downward into one of his lungs. After a period of recovery that could have taken a number of weeks—his doctors were limited in what they could do as chest injuries were complicated to treat, and the patient was usually left to try and heal on their own with conservative treatment¹—during which time the Swedish king sent messages to the French court demanding justice for Peyron's murder, Auguste-Marie-Raymond fully recovered and returned to his military duties with more zeal than before.

The La Marck Infantry Regiment had suffered terrible losses during the expedition to India, mainly through disease while on the Isle de France. Therefore Auguste set about bringing it back to full strength again. Over the next few years Auguste-Marie-Raymond and his officers trained their new recruits to such a good degree, that the regiment gained the reputation as being the best-drilled unit in the entire French army. It was probably at the end of this period that Auguste-Marie-Raymond wrote and published his infantry drill manual, and latterly became a Maréchal de Camp in March 1788. With his promotion he also became the Inspector-General of Infantry for the Aunis and Poitou provinces in western France, which was his main military occupation before the French Revolution began in 1789.

¹ Crumplin, Michael, *Men of Steel: Surgery in the Napoleonic Wars*, Shrewsbury, UK, Quiller Press, an imprint of Quiller Publishing Ltd, 2007, pages 263-269

At the beginning of the French Revolution in 1789 Auguste-Marie-Raymond actually supported the principles of the republicans. Due to his marriage and ownership of his Raismes estate, even though he was no Frenchman by birth, Auguste-Marie-Raymond was allowed to represent the district of Le Quesnoy in the newly formed States-General (États Généraux), as one of the noble members from January 1789. Later, from June 1789 until September 1791, he was part of the Constitutional Assembly (Assemblée Constituante), which is where he met Honoré Gabriel Riquet de Mirabeau. Both men shared the idea of having a constitutional monarchy. When the Brabant Revolution began in the Austrian-Netherlands in 1790, Auguste-Marie-Raymond travelled to his homeland and tried to use his influence there. However, this turned sour and he only escaped back to France by providing evidence that he was a general officer in the French army.

The Austrian ambassador in Paris, Florimond-Claude de Mercy-Argenteau, had noted his actions, however, and he told Auguste-Marie-Raymond that King Louis XVI wanted to harness Mirabeau's moderate influence in the Constitutional Assembly. As such Auguste-Marie-Raymond, a close associate of the royal family, agreed to become the intermediary between Louis XVI, his allies and Mirabeau, and carried secret correspondence between the parties concerned. But Mirabeau died on April 2, 1791 and he named Auguste-Marie-Raymond as the executor of his will due to their now close relationship. This meant Auguste received copies of all of the letters sent between the royal family and Mirabeau. Some months later, in October 1791, the more radical National Assembly (Assemblée Nationale Législative) was formed, which no longer recognised noble titles and privileges. As such Auguste-Marie-Raymond's La Marck Infantry Regiment was taken from him—it had already become the 77th Régiment d'Infanterie de Ligne at the beginning of 1791—and his title of Count of La Marck disregarded.

Due to these changes Auguste-Marie-Raymond became an Émigré and fled to Brussels with de Mercy-Argenteau, who left Paris around the same time. He worked with the Austrians, whose family also originated from the Austrian Netherlands, for most of the next two years without official rank in the Austrian army, as Emperor Francis II of Austria refused to take him into his service. During both 1792 and 1793 he and de Mercy-Argenteau tried to help Queen Marie Antoinette, but she was still executed despite their efforts. After the French invaded the Austrian Netherlands for a second time in 1794 they both went to Vienna. Here Auguste-Marie-Raymond was given the rank of general-major in August 1794, although one source suggests 1792. In 1795 the Emperor sent him to the Austrian army in Italy, but the exact details of his orders are poorly documented. After this he went to Switzerland, where he settled for the next two years until 1798 when the French invaded, trying to escape the upheaval around Europe.

When Napoleon became the First Consul, and later Emperor of France, his older brother, Louis-Engelbert, 6th Duke of Arenberg, gained his favour to protect the Arenberg estates in Belgium, the extent of which included the

creation of a light cavalry regiment in 1806 commanded by his son, Prosper-Louis. It seems Auguste-Marie-Raymond, homesick perhaps, hearing of this wanted to return to France, even suggesting with a general officers rank in the army. But Napoleon forbade this from happening, and so he had to remain in Vienna until the end of the Napoleonic Wars. This is somewhat interesting as his son, Ernest-Engelbert, was allowed back to Belgium in 1802—having fought as a major in the Austrian army against Napoleon at Marengo in 1800—and in 1803 became a French citizen, renouncing any claim to his father's title as Count of La Marck.

In 1814, when the Dutch royal family of the House of Orange were re-established in the Netherlands, and Belgium was joined with it to form the Kingdom of the Netherlands, Auguste-Marie-Raymond was given military rank in the country's army. This was most probably because he came from one of the most prominent noble families in Belgium. In 1816 he was given the rank of *generaal-luitenant*, a rank that he held for the next 15 years. In 1830, when Belgium split from the Netherlands in the Belgian Revolution, he had to relinquish his commission in the Dutch army.

For most of the period after the end of the Napoleonic Wars, Auguste-Marie-Raymond lived in the city of Brussels. Toward the end of his life he began to put together a work about the collection of correspondence he had received from Mirabeau when he had died in 1791. He stated that it should only be published after his death, as he wanted history to judge his actions. The letters were eventually published in 1851 by Adolphe Fourier de Bacourt, who had helped Auguste-Marie-Raymond edit the book, and titled *Correspondance entre le Comte de Mirabeau et le Comte de la Marck pendant les Années 1789, 1790, et 1791*.

Auguste-Marie-Raymond died in Brussels on September 26, 1833.²

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² Juste, Théodore, 'Arenberg, Auguste-Marie-Raymond, Prince', *Biographie Nationale de Belgique*, Volume I, Brussels, Académie Royale de Belgique, 1866, pages 431-436; Brette, Armand (Editor), *Recueil de Documents Relatifs à la Convocation des États Généraux de 1789*, Volume II, Paris, Imprimerie Nationale, 1896, pages 188-189; Grar, Edouard, *Histoire de la Recherche, de la Découverte et de l'Exploitation de la Houille dans le Hainaut Français, dans la Flandre Française et dans l'Artois: 1716-1791*, Volume III, Valenciennes, A. Pringet, 1850, pages 37-43; Rose, Rev. Hugh James, *A New General Biographical Dictionary*, Volume II, London, Richard Clay, 1848, page 106; Littell, Eliakim and Robert S. Littell, 'Correspondence entre le Comte de Mirabeau et le Comte de la Marck, pendant les années 1789, 1790, et 1791', *Littell's Living Age*, Volume XXX, Boston, USA, Littell & Co., 1851, pages 221-227; Anonymous, 'Mirabeau's Relations with the Court of Louis XVI', *The Dublin University Magazine: A Literary and Political Journal*, Volume 39, February 1852, Dublin, Republic of Ireland, James McGlashan, pages 151-167; Larousse, Pierre, 'Arenberg, Auguste-Marie-Raymond, Prince', *Grand Dictionnaire Universel du XIXe Siècle*, Volume I, Paris, Administration du Grand Dictionnaire Universel, 1866, page 594; Roux, Joseph-Siméon, Le Bailli de Suffren dans l'Inde, Marseille, Barlatier, Feissat et Demonchy, 1862, pages 175-208; Cust, Sir Edward, *Annals of the Wars of the Eighteenth Century*, Volume III, 1760-1783, London, John Murray, 1869, pages 305-312, 315-320; Cust, Sir Edward, *Annals of the Wars of the Eighteenth Century*, Volume IV, 1783-1795, London, John Murray, 1869, pages 6-14; Fortescue, John W., *A History of the British Army*, Volume III, 1763-1793, London, Macmillan & Co. Limited, 1911, pages 481-485; Wilson, William John, *History of the Madras Army*, Volume II, Madras, India, E. Keys at the Government Press, 1882, pages 73-85; de Bacourt, Adolphe Fourier (Editor), *Correspondance entre le Comte de Mirabeau et le Comte de la Marck pendant les Années 1789, 1790, et 1791*, Brussels, Auguste Pagny, 1851