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FROM RUSSIA WITH LOVE: TOLSTOY, GANDHI AND ISABELLA FYVIE MAYO¹

This article explores the activities of I.F. Mayo in the light of her relations with Leo Tolstoy and M. Gandhi.

Key words: I.F. Mayo, L. Tolstoy, M. Gandhi, V. Chertkov, Tolstoy's ethical-religious teaching, Tolstoyans.

By the end of the nineteenth century Count Leo Tolstoy was probably the most famous living author in the world. He wrote and received thousands of letters² and, as is well known, in 1909 and 1910 his correspondents included Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi from South Africa [2. Vol. 9. P. 444–446, 528–29, 593. Vol. 10. P. 210, 306–307, 505, 511– 514]. This chapter follows the activities of a Scottish woman, Isabella Fyvie Mayo, who was in contact with both men and was one of the first to write about the ideological rapport between them.

Isabella Fyvie Mayo (1843–1914) was an evangelical Christian Socialist. From the mid-1860s onwards she wrote slight novels, short stories and articles for the religious press and respectable family and children's periodicals, such as the *Girls' Own Paper*, *The Quiver* and *The Sunday Magazine*, often published under the pseudonym "Edward Garrett"³. From an early age she was greatly influenced by the maverick art critic and social reformer, John Ruskin, whom she described, in 1881, as the prophet of the present age⁴ [7]. Then, in autumn 1887, when she was forty-four, she discovered Leo Tolstoy's writings while on a visit to Oxford. Like many of the people who were most strongly influenced by Tolstoy, her experience did not follow a typical 'conversion' trajectory⁵,

¹ With thanks to Richard Davies, University of Leeds Russian Archive, and the late Dr James Hunt, Shaw University N.C., and Jane Hunt.

² The Tolstoy archives in Moscow contain over 9,000 letters from about 6,000 foreign correspondents: [1. P. 185–215].

³ For additional biographical and bibliographical information see: [3–5] and [6] (this useful introduction unfortunately contains some uncorrected errors due to the late Dr James Hunt's illness).

⁴ Both Tolstoy and Gandhi were also influenced by Ruskin's work, especially *Unto this Last*.

⁵ Charlotte Alston suggests many Tolstoyan 'converts' had an untypical conversion experience compared with other religious converts [8].

but nevertheless she later recalled the occasion in the language of religious revelation:

The first piece of his work I was thus destined to read was the exquisite fragment, “Lucerne”. When I laid down the book [*A Russian Proprietor and Other Stories*], I felt I had encountered a mind under whose sway I realised and understood my own thoughts and feelings as never before. I was conscious of a new light upon all life – a light rising within myself, though kindled by Tolstoy’s words [9. P. 153].

Over the next three years Isabella Fyvie Mayo sought every publication she could find written by Tolstoy. In 1890 she attempted to record these in chronological order and forwarded her list to everyone she knew of who was interested in Tolstoy’s philosophy. She did this so that she could make sense of his writings and the development of his beliefs. Twenty years later, she still believed in the importance of placing his ideas within the chronological context of his experiences and ideological influences. ‘[W]hat he has written he has first lived’, she commented [9. P. 153], [10]. Although *War and Peace* had been published in Russia in 1869 and *Anna Karenina* in 1877, virtually none of Tolstoy’s works were published in English before 1885. Thereafter his writings, literary and polemical, religious, social and political, old and new, began arriving in indiscriminate order in Britain, so that her self-imposed task was not easy.

Tolstoy’s influence became apparent in Mrs Fyvie Mayo’s non-fiction writing almost immediately, as she slipped passing references to him into articles about authors as diverse as Jane Austen, John Greenleaf Whittier, and Alexander Pushkin¹ [11–13]. In 1891 she contributed a series of articles on social issues to *The Leisure Hour*, a journal published by The Religious Tract Society, which contained popular articles and fiction written from a Christian viewpoint. The articles, substantially flavoured with Christian Socialism, included several unattributed references to, or quotations by, Tolstoy. When considering social schemes one should not ask will a scheme ‘do any good’, but rather, what is it right for us to do, she argued in one article [14. P. 203]. In another she inserted a quotation from *My Religion/What I Believe* into a fictionalised dialogue [15. P. 541]. Fyvie Mayo referred to Tolstoy variously as “one of the

¹ Fyvie Mayo was one of only a handful of British writers to commemorate the anniversary of Pushkin’s birth.

greatest of living thinkers', a 'renowned writer of this century' and 'a great living moralist' in her various articles, but did not name him, which suggests there were objections in contemporary conventional religious circles to Tolstoy's version of Christianity. When the *Leisure Hour* editor bravely accepted an article giving a sympathetic summary of Tolstoy's literature and philosophy from another contributor in 1889, he added an editorial caveat which indicates the general attitude Fyvie Mayo faced from the mainstream British religious readership:

With a life and experience so peculiar, and a nature so intense as that of Count Tolstoi, there cannot fail to be much in a narrative setting forth the great motive thoughts of his life which must excite question and even opposition, But no true impression could be given of the man without stating as conscientiously as possible his peculiar ideas. So far as they are erroneous, or represent rather the struggle of a soul after truth than its complete attainment... [16. P. 167]

Virtually unknown in Great Britain before the mid-1880s, during the late 1880s and 1890s a flood of literary references to Tolstoy and his writings appeared in the English language press; one bibliography listed 346 books and articles published up to about 1902, and this excluded items in the daily and weekly press [17]¹. Most of the periodical items described Tolstoy and his home life. A few described or analysed his literary writings, but almost none seriously discussed his religious philosophy. *The Leisure Hour* article mentioned above was one of the exceptions, and in early 1892 Isabella Fyvie Mayo used the contemporary interest aroused by Tolstoy's efforts to alleviate the Russian famine and a sympathetic editor, to write a similar, simpler biographical article for *The Victorian Magazine*, in which she summarised Tolstoy's life and explained the development of his beliefs as illustrated in his writing [20]. This, and the various surreptitious references Fyvie Mayo incorporated, are interesting in a cultural context because rather than appearing in either the mainstream literary reviews or the in-house publications of various Tolstoyan followers which are normally researched for responses and reactions to new ideas amongst the British intellectual heavyweights, they appeared in periodicals which may be described as 'below the cannon', unashamedly popularist middle-class magazines such as *The Argosy*, *Atlanta*, *The Leisure Hour*, *The Sun* and *The Victorian Magazine*. From the

¹ For aspects of Tolstoy's influence on Britain and the reciprocal impact see: [18–19].

start she wanted to rouse the sympathies of the British public so that it would not blindly commit its judgment of the character and teaching of such a man to the pert verdict of the narrower section of the more “cultured,”— few of whom have cared even to try to find out the proper sequence of his work, so that they may study it in its living development! [20. P. 316].

Tolstoy’s religious understanding of the New Testament was based on a moral rather than a miraculous reading. He interpreted God as love, and believed each individual had the divine spirit of love within them. In 1894 he published *The Kingdom of God is Within You*, which was banned in Russia. He argued that Christians had failed to recognise that having a love for everyone required that evil should not be resisted by violence, particularly in the form of war or legalized state coercion. He contrasted the teachings of Jesus with the dogma and ritual of the Church(es) on these issues, and called for each individual to make a personal commitment to the truth, to resolve this. The precept Isabella Fyvie Mayo took most strongly to heart was the importance of following one’s conscience, regardless of the consequence. She interpreted this that she should speak out both verbally and in her writing, in situations where previously social convention and politeness to others had led her to remain silent. Many years later she wrote:

Tolstoy has given me my true self – has shown me that where I surrendered my own consciousness of right to conventionality and to the opinions of others, I have done wrong and have suffered loss for so doing. He has given me a new and better world [21. P. 181–182].

Translation

Since Tolstoy had waived his copyright on his later writings, many cheaply produced and poorly translated versions of his works poured onto the market. In some of these Tolstoy’s complicated reasoning was almost unintelligible. At some point Fyvie Mayo must have contacted Tolstoy’s formally-designated agent, Vladimir Grigor’evich Chertkov, and offered to help produce more readable versions. Chertkov, though much younger than Tolstoy, was his closest friend and intellectual colleague, and he was absolutely, perhaps obsessively, committed to both publicizing and pre-

serving every word and idea expressed by Tolstoy¹. Banished from Russia for his support for the Dukhobors, Chertkov came to England in 1897, where in 1900 he set up Izdatel'stvo Svobodnago Slova (Free Word Press) to produce and publish Tolstoy's writings in Russian and then the Free Age Press [FAP] to produce cheap editions of Tolstoy's works in English for an international readership [26]. Chertkov's presence made England an important centre of Tolstoyan publishing activity. Isabella Fyvie Mayo became involved in this milieu involving people of diverse nationalities, political viewpoints and cultural interests united by their enthusiasm for Tolstoy's philosophy². She worked briefly while Arthur Fifield was manager at the FAP, but much of her work was with Chertkov himself, especially after Fifield left and Chertkov and the principal Tolstoyan translator Aylmer Maude fell out. Different drafts with amendments and queries were sent back and forth between Aberdeen in north-east Scotland and Tuckton House at Christchurch in the south of England. Chertkov was extremely difficult to work with, and it may have been the geographical separation, as well as a shared sense of urgency and belief in the importance of Tolstoy's precept of non-resistance to evil, that enabled Isabella Fyvie Mayo to collaborate with him so effectively. She debated non-resistance with Aylmer Maude in the *Humane Review* and considered that Aylmer Maude's rejection of Tolstoy's philosophy of non-resistance to evil by violence should have disqualified him from being Tolstoy's biographer³ [21, 25, 27], [6. P. 51].

The description of Isabella Fyvie Mayo as a co-translator of various FAP publications has misled some scholars into assuming she could speak Russian. A publication which she was probably not personally involved with, described the process more accurately as being 'translated, englished and conformed to the original' [29]. Chertkov described the procedure that he and Isabella Fyvie Mayo had used. A Russian speaker (often himself) made a first translation. This was then sent to Fyvie Mayo who revised it into a more standard, flowing English and added any queries about interpretation, clarity or need for referencing that occurred to her, before returning it for a final careful check against the Russian origi-

¹ On Chertkov see: [19, 22–25].

² There is insufficient space here to consider Fyvie Mayo's interaction with other British Tolstoyans.

³ Isabella Fyvie Mayo, letter to Vladimir Grigor'evich Chertkov, 17 January 1914, quoted in [28].

nal to ensure than no mutilations of meaning had crept in [30]. This method of combining two linguistic amateurs was a common procedure for foreign translations at a time when there were few trained translators [31] and, moreover, at the FAP they were either being paid very little or provided their service free. However Aylmer Maude, a fluent Russian speaker, was highly critical of these FAP translations. Chertkov was insistent that translations of Tolstoy's work should be as literal as possible, preserving the style and peculiarities of Tolstoy's composition which often deliberately broke literary conventions. He noted in particular the tendency of translators to use synonyms where Tolstoy had repeated the same word in the original. Tolstoy used literature and language transparently and simply, concentrating on telling people what to do with their lives, rather than becoming involved in the angst of considering whether it was possible to express oneself accurately through language¹. Fyvie Mayo approved of Tolstoy's use of plain words to describe activities for which most people used euphemisms and Chertkov was confident that she would closely follow the sense of the passages. It is ironic perhaps that Isabella Fyvie Mayo's own prose style was often flowery and opaque.

The first text with which Fyvie Mayo is definitely known to have been involved was a re-rendering of *What I Believe*, which was published in April 1902: 'We have to thank our friend Mrs Fyvie Mayo for much assistance in revising the English of this originally very rugged translation, a reprint, with numerous and lengthy omissions replaced, and so altered as to be almost a new rendering, of the version published in 1885 by Messrs. Kogan Paul & Co.' [32–33]. She also helped with a new edition of *What Shall We Do?*, in which Tolstoy concentrated on social problems, especially poverty and inequality in Russia, and on a new edition of his key text, *The Kingdom of God is Within you*² [32]. Other English versions Isabella Fyvie Mayo assisted with included *An Appeal to the Clergy of all Countries* (1903) (a scathing indictment of the church); *The Morals of Diet: or, The first step* (1903) (advocating

¹ Rebecca Beasley, 'The Simple Life in Print', keynote paper at Cultural Cross-Currents Between Russia & Britain in the Nineteenth Century Conference, Birmingham City University, 19 July 2013.

² In the confusion following the resignation of the manager, Arthur Fifield, Isabella Fyvie Mayo was incorrectly listed (as I.F.M.) as an editor of both books, while Chertkov's name was omitted, as were the names of other translators.

vegetarianism) and *Tolstoy on Shakespeare* (1906) (an extremely critical review). After Chertkov's return to Russia, and Tolstoy's death, she continued in collaboration with Alexander Sirnis (Aleksandr Denisovich Zirnits) who was based at Tuckton House, and with the London Tolstoyan publisher Charles Daniel who had taken over the FAP publications [34–36]. At the time of her death she was editing an edition of Tolstoy's diaries and planning to write a preface and explanatory notes for an English edition of Bulgakov's account of Tolstoy's last months [37–39].

Tolstoy often wrote in response to political events or in reply to correspondence he had received, and a number of these polemical 'letter-articles' appeared first in British newspapers before being published as separate pamphlets for worldwide distribution or republication abroad. Those which Fyvie Mayo helped to shape in translation included *To the Working People* which was serialized in *The New Age* in 1902, Tolstoy's analysis of Garrison's anti-slavery campaign as essentially one of non-resistance, which appeared in *The Manchester Guardian* [40–43] and four articles and a long letter, all of which were published, in full, in *The Times* in 1904 and 1905, often filling more than an entire page. These included *Bethink Yourselves* (an important letter on the Russian – Japanese War)¹ [44], *The Crisis in Russia* [45–46²], *A Great Iniquity* (Tolstoy's famous letter on land ownership in Russia in which he supported the single-tax system of Henry George) [47] and *The One Thing Needful* [48–49³]. When the London *Daily News* wondered why *The Times* published Tolstoy's comments, when it would not have published similar outspoken criticism of the British government or monarchy, Fyvie Mayo responded with an article defending Tolstoy in Charles Daniel's idiosyncratic little periodical *The Crank*⁴ [51–52].

Commentary

Isabella Fyvie Mayo was anxious to emphasise that Tolstoy's political analysis had a universal, not just a Russian, relevance, and that it was

¹ This was widely published in Britain and America.

² And separate editions by William Heinemann in February 1906 and Free Age Press, July 1906.

³ *The Times* also published [50]. This was the first English translation of a letter written several years earlier.

⁴ *The Crank* continued as *The Open Road* from 1907.

embedded in his religious and ethical ideology¹. ‘The force of Tolstoy’s teaching is wholly spiritual’, she commented [9. P. 159]. When Tolstoy’s articles were published as booklets by the FAP and distributed worldwide in their distinctive green paper covers, ‘notes’ by her were included in five of them. This made her the only person ‘officially’ permitted to provide a commentary on Tolstoy’s ideas alongside his texts during his lifetime and is further evidence of her close collaboration with Chertkov [6. P. 225]. She wished to emphasise the relevance of Tolstoy’s analysis to a worldwide and, more especially, a British and imperial context. So, with respect to the land question she argued that, ‘[t]he first duty of the British workers is to refrain from entering the Army or Navy, these being the tools whereby their landowning class defend their own possessions at home, and exploit and seize on the land of others abroad’². She criticised the racist attitudes of British politicians of all parties³. She supported Tolstoy’s criticism of the contemporary belief that science could provide social and moral answers [48. P. 52–55]. She attacked the churches for their militarism, their racism and their religious mis-teaching [53]. And in a critique of government and the State, she succinctly summarised the injustices and inequalities of specific legal and political institutions, the abuse of the press, the use of armed force, constraints on freedom of speech and on the freedom of the individual, all in a worldwide context, but chiefly using examples from the British Empire and the U.S. [54–56⁴].

Isabella Fyvie Mayo had always thought of God and Christian teaching in terms of love, and her concept of the widely used trope ‘brotherhood’ was both more nuanced and more encompassing than that of many Christian Socialists or Tolstoyans, especially its applicability ‘below and above all details of creed, civilization, and colour’ [3. P. 304]. In 1893 she co-founded the Society for the Recognition of the Brotherhood of Man, which was essentially an anti-racism organisation with a journal, *Fraternity* [4]. When *Fraternity* folded in 1897 she wrote for *The New*

¹ Holman notes that Tolstoy’s emphasis on Russia was a weakness for any long term interest in his ideas: [26. P. 197].

² ‘Note by Isabella Fyvie Mayo’, in Tolstoy: [47. P. 37–39].

³ ‘Note by Isabella Fyvie Mayo’, in Tolstoy: [48. P. 52–55]. This note incorporated and expanded her earlier article, ‘Inviolable’.

⁴ In the Heinemann edition the page headings for the ‘Note’ are given incorrectly as ‘The End of the Age’.

Age and in 1906–1907 she briefly contributed an ‘Indian column’, based on extracts from the Indian press. In mid-December 1906 she quoted approvingly from *The Light of India* edited by Baba Bharati, from California [57¹]. This publication was also read by Tolstoy, who noted the ‘interesting article... in an Indian journal about yellow and white civilisations’ in his diary for 21 November [58. P. 560 (and fn. 49), 715]. This raises the interesting question as to whether Tolstoy alerted Fyvie Mayo to this publication or whether she had responded independently to a review copy received at *The New Age*. She also contributed to English language Indian periodicals such as *East and West*, edited in Bombay by social reformer B.M. Malabari. In 1908 she wrote against militarism, ostensibly (but provocatively in an Indian context) referring to Russia as an example of Tolstoy’s thesis that militarism was the basis of tyranny, but that it could not exist without the connivance of those who suffered under it [59]. In 1911 she introduced the Anglo-Indian and Indian readership to Tolstoy, with a revised and updated version of her 1892 *Victorian Magazine* article in which she also drew the attention of Indian readers to Tolstoy’s support for M. K. Gandhi, the leader of the British Indian passive resisters in South Africa [10].

Gandhi

Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi was probably introduced to Tolstoy’s writing by the idiosyncratic Englishmen he encountered in London vegetarian restaurants whilst he was a student in 1889–1891, a period when British interest in Tolstoy was increasing greatly. In 1893 he read and was particularly impressed by *The Kingdom of God is Within You*. During his first years in South Africa he read a number of Tolstoy’s books, and in 1905 he wrote an article on Tolstoy in Gujarati for *Indian Opinion*, the journal he had started two years earlier². Three of his closest European friends and supporters, Henry Polak, Lewis W. Ritch and Hermann Kallenbach were also keen Tolstoy sympathisers, and in 1910 Kallenbach wrote to Tolstoy explaining that he had named the farm he had bought for the use of Gandhi’s passive resistance movement as Tolstoy Farm³. Gandhi came across Tolstoy’s *Letter to a Hindoo* during his visit to London

¹ Fyvie Mayo misnamed it *The Light of Asia*.

² For Tolstoy’s influence on Gandhi see: [6. P. 37–41], [60].

³ On Kallenbach see: [61–62].

in 1909. On learning that Tolstoy advocated a non-violent revolution in India, Gandhi wrote to him about his own passive resistance campaigns taking place in South Africa against the discriminatory legislation of the British authorities. Gandhi hoped Tolstoy would publicise his passive struggle against the British and, to promote this himself, he published part of their correspondence in *Indian Opinion*. He had been disappointed by the poor response of the British press to Tolstoy's *Letter to a Hindoo* (which the *Manchester Guardian* and the *Daily News* had both rejected) and to Joseph Doke's biography, *M.K. Gandhi: an Indian Patriot in South Africa*, which was published during Gandhi's visit to London in 1909 and which had mentioned Tolstoy as an important influence [63]. Tolstoy's last letter to Gandhi was written in September 1910. Tolstoy asked Chertkov to translate it into English and, aware of Tolstoy's continuing interest in this passive resistance campaign, Chertkov forwarded Tolstoy's letter to Gandhi with a covering note of his own:

As it seems to me most desirable that more should be known in England about your movement, I am writing to a great friend of mine and of Tolstoy – Mrs. Fyvie Mayo of Glasgow [sic] —proposing that she should enter into communication with you. She possesses considerable literary talent and is well known in England as an author. It should be worth your while furnishing her with all your publications which might serve her as material for an article upon your movement which, if published, in England, would attract attention to your work and position. Mrs. Mayo will probably write to you herself [64].

Isabella Fyvie Mayo did write, and a month later Gandhi informed Chertkov that he was sending her information [65]. She published three articles in 1911 and another in 1913, and in each article she referred to Tolstoy's support for the passive resistance movement in South Africa [66–69]. Moreover she suggested that 'something like "apostolic succession"' connected Gandhi to Tolstoy, thus making an early contribution to the mythologisation of Gandhi.

Not only had he [Gandhi] learned much from Tolstoy, but within a few weeks of Tolstoy's departure into the Invisible¹, Tolstoy himself,

¹ Tolstoy died about eleven weeks later.

never having seen him, yet recognised him and the far-reaching importance of his principles in practice. He wrote to him:-

“Your activity is the most essential work, the most important of all the work now being done in the world, and in it, not only the nations of the Christian world, but of all the world, will unavoidably take part”¹.

Gandhi asked his friend Hermann Kallenbach to keep in touch with Isabella Fyvie Mayo. They corresponded almost weekly over the next three and a half years and in September 1911 Kallenbach visited her in Aberdeen² [6. P. 48–52, 226–227], [60, P. 382, 452]. She gave him useful introductions to fellow Tolstoyans in Britain, particularly Florence and Charles Daniel who also maintained a correspondence, and after his visit Kallenbach also corresponded with George Ferdinands, a member of her household³ [60. P. 451], [70]. Gandhi read Fyvie Mayo and Kallenbach’s correspondence, sometimes commenting on Kallenbach’s replies and on one occasion waiting for a letter from Fyvie Mayo before writing to the Countess Tolstoy [71]. Occasionally Gandhi and Fyvie Mayo corresponded directly [72]. When she died, Gandhi wrote an obituary in *Indian Opinion*: ‘She was one of the few true interpreters of Tolstoy’s teachings, and she will be best known to the world as such’ [73]. Although he altered and adapted them, Tolstoy’s ideas continued to be influential in Gandhi’s thinking and practice⁴. Isabella Fyvie Mayo was a living and reinforcing link with Tolstoy’s ideas and her weekly letters enabled Gandhi to see his experimental community at Tolstoy Farm as part of a world-wide spiritual movement.

Isabella Fyvie Mayo never visited Russia or met Tolstoy. But in her *Recollections*, completed in 1909, she quoted a message ‘which Leo Tolstoy has just written to me’ and in September 1910, Tolstoy noted in his diary that he had received a letter from her, so they too were in personal communication, probably using Chertkov as the intermediary [3. P. 431], [58. P. 668]. Tolstoy would also have seen and approved her commentaries on his articles, which may in turn have influenced him. She must have

¹ Fyvie Mayo [66. P. 197], citing Tolstoy to Gandhi, 7 September 1910, as translated by Vladimir Chertkov. Other differing translations would not have been available to her.

² The Mayo-Kallenbach correspondence was in the Kallenbach Archive at Haifa, Israel, which was purchased for the National Archives of India in 2012.

³ For George Ferdinands see: [4].

⁴ Whilst Tolstoy taught absolute non-violence even against the evil of state coercion, Gandhi used passive resistance as a political tool. There is not space here to consider Fyvie Mayo’s interpretation.

met Chertkov when he was in Britain as George Ferdinands later mentioned that he had done so, while extant letters from her to Chertkov in 1912 and 1914 indicate that the association continued after Chertkov's return to Russia and after Tolstoy's death, and thus during the period when she was corresponding with Kallenbach and Gandhi¹ [74], [19. P. 256 (fn. 42)]. Isabella Fyvie Mayo's connections with Tolstoy, Chertkov and the Tolstoyan networks of the FAP, *The New Age*, Charles Daniel and Gandhi not only illustrate the cultural cross-currents that existed between Russia and Britain, but also the way in which Britain could become a transnational conduit, both extending and transmuting ideas emanating from Russia into the wider English-speaking world and beyond.

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¹ Ferdinands may not have been a fully committed 'Tolstoyan' but he was certainly sympathetic.

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ИЗ РОССИИ С ЛЮБОВЬЮ: ТОЛСТОЙ, ГАНДИ И ИЗABELЛА ФАЙВИ МЭЙО

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Ключевые слова: И.Ф. Мэйо, Лев Толстой, Ганди, этико-религиозное учение Толстого, толстовцы.

Изабелла Файви Мэйо (1843–1914) была приверженцем евангелизма и христианского социализма, автором небольших повестей, рассказов и статей для религиозной прессы и уважаемых семейных и детских периодических изданий (часто

писала под псевдонимом «Эдвард Гарретт»). Она впервые познакомилась с сочинениями Толстого в 1887 г. и позднее описывала свою реакцию как нечто схожее с религиозным откровением. К 1894 г. она стала последователем Толстого и этической анархисткой. Мэйо обратилась к близкому другу Толстого Владимиру Черткову, в то время сосланному в Англию, по поводу английских переводов сочинений Толстого, и к 1900 г. стала оказывать Черткову помощь в издании религиозных, этических и политических произведений Толстого в издательстве «Фри Эйдж Пресс».

Стремясь показать, что политические наблюдения Толстого так же актуальны в Великобритании и Британской империи, как и в России, Мэйо писала критические комментарии, которые были опубликованы в нескольких брошюрах Толстого. Мэйо – единственный человек, которому официально разрешили делать это при жизни писателя.

Незадолго до своей смерти Толстой посоветовал Черткову поддерживать связь с М. Ганди и его кампанией пассивного сопротивления в Южной Африке. Чертков предложил, чтобы это делала Изабелла Файви Мэйо, и с 1911 г. до своей смерти Файви Мэйо регулярно переписывалась с Ганди либо непосредственно, либо через своего близкого друга, Германа Калленбаха, который посещал ее в Британии. Так Мэйо создала связь между идеями Толстого и Ганди, которого она позиционировала как духовного наследника Толстого в британской и индийской англоязычной прессе. Она была посредником, посвятив себя продвижению взглядов и идей Толстого в различных литературных и культурных контекстах.