







Some lovers of literature consider the detective novel to be a waste of time. I am obliged to add that wasting my time is not an unpleasurable activity for me. "Seven writers went to the seaside." The words sound like the beginning of a nursery rhyme, or one of Edward Lear's limericks.

Polite and curious, the writers followed their host and his strange machine. It was not the first time they'd seen a billionaire, but they'd never seen such a jolly one. Ghyll was bursting with the self-confidence that comes from success and money. He'd made his fortune—an immense one, it was said—in door-to-door sales of clothes-scrubbing machines in America. But he'd also entered into a very successful marriage. He was fortunate, too, to have invested in transmissions, and then weaponry, in 1916... a year when demand was booming.





