## THE FAMOUS BLACK PANTHER

. . . THE DOCTOR AND I STOPPED to look at the famous black panther, which died the following winter of lung-disease—just as though it had been a young girl.

All around us was the usual public of the zoological gardens, soldiers and nurse-maids, who love to stroll round the cages and throw nutshells and orange-peel at the sleepy animals. The panther, before whose cage we had arrived, was of that particular species which comes from the island of Java, the country where nature is most luxuriant, and seems itself like some great tigress untameable by man. In Java the flowers have more brilliancy and perfume, the fruits more taste, the animals more beauty and strength, than in any other country in the world.

Lying gracefully with its paws stretched out in front, its head up, and its emerald eyes motionless, the panther was a splendid specimen of the savage products of the country. Not a touch of yellow sullies its black velvet skin—of a blackness so deep and dull that the sunlight was absorbed by it as water is absorbed by a sponge. When you turned from this ideal form of supple beauty—of terrific force in repose—of silent and royal disdain—to the human creatures who were timidly gazing at it, open-eyed and open-mouthed, it was not the human beings who had the superiority over the animal. The latter was so much the superior that the comparison was humiliating.

BARBEY D'AUREVILLY (1808-1889), France

