THE PUZZLER
BY EMILY COX AND HENRY RATHVON

A Hard Act to Follow

If the diagram appears a little odd, it’s because we have first numbered a set of unclued items from 1 to 10, and then continued the numbering from the upper left for all remaining entries. As the reason for this may be hard to understand, we advise you to consult the letters falling in squares 34, 6, 26, 33, 23, 3, 31, 22, and 41 for a key two-word phrase. Six clue answers are capitalized.

Note: The instructions above are for this month’s puzzle only. An introduction to clue-solving may be found online at www.theatlantic.com/issues/puzzclue.htm.

ACROSS

13. Out of sight of men only ironclad? (8)
17. Complete parcel packed with uranium (3-3)
18. The Babe’s teammate’s club is no good (5)
19. Secure space, in retrospect (4)
20. Island that’s near you if you’re Italian (4)
21. What pigs eat by error or inclination (5)
23. Society isn’t satisfactory for good people (6)
24. Special case of a tree, to Mr. Fudd (4)
25. Supremes for man-made nets (6)
26. Emcee the opening of aluminum plant (5)
27. R&B recording artist covered by Margaret Hamilton (6)
28. Source of pop musical with a rock score (6)
29. Rack made by wheel in orchard (6)
30. Follow closely or adapt (6)
31. Commercial about inspiration was entertaining (6)
32. Live next to a sphere (4)
33. Obeisant gesture the old lady sadly returned (6)
34. Minor comet moved with a regular fluctuation (10)
35. Mom going topless, or else (5)
36. Toy for a little more than half a buck (4)
37. Flower is located outside of the Ocean State (4)
38. Back and front of unpainted Indian (5)
39. Decay eroded wheel (6)
40. Occasions for light, strangely dim as yet (8)
41. You might say I had taken a look (4)

DOWN

1. Trial about a male meeker than any other (6)
2. Lily’s cousin embracing love, laughter, and song (5,2)
3. Bunk about a layer of oil? (4)
4. Get rid of yen after parking (5)
5. Pack a southern U.S. city (5)
6. Island that’s near you if you’re Italian (4)
7. One who brings you up the inside way? (6)
8. Sound implements for man-made nets (6)
9. Stray pet I see jabber? (7)
10. A team in the NFL returned aquatic gear (5)
11. Enzyme is pale fluid (6)
12. Enzyme is pale fluid (6)
13. Bunk about a layer of oil? (4)
14. One who brings you up the inside way? (6)
15. Sound implements for man-made nets (6)
16. Stray pet I see jabber? (7)
17. A team in the NFL returned aquatic gear (5)
18. Enzyme is pale fluid (6)
19. Sing without words or wit (5)
20. Supreme Court justice resorted to sham (6)
21. R&B recording artist covered by Margaret Hamilton (6)
22. Source of pop musical with a rock score (6)
23. Track made by wheel in orchard (6)
24. Follow closely or adapt (6)
25. Commercial about inspiration was entertaining (6)