

IF WE CAN ?

civilization and its own future less than one which breaks agreements it has made. If it does that, it will seem to have made the agreements only so that it might have the advantage of unexpectedly breaking them ; and this is an advantage for which it will not soon be forgiven. That seems now to be the case of the Germans. They undertook not to use poisonous gases in war, as they undertook not to violate Belgium neutrality ; and in both cases they have gained an advantage by breaking their agreement. We cannot tell how far this bad faith was meant from the first. Probably they always meant to violate Belgian neutrality but not to use poisonous gases. They may have entered into most of their agreements meaning to keep them. Unfortunately they could not conceive of a war in which Germany would not soon make her victory certain. They were ready to keep their agreements, or some of them, so long as her victory seemed certain ; but when the certainty vanished, then, they felt, the agreements must vanish too ; and they must get what advantage they could by breaking them. This is a war, they say, of life and death ; and what do agreements matter compared with the survival of Germany ? Hence their growing disregard for all international law, both in its main principles and in its details, a disregard which has culminated so far in the use of poisonous gases and in the sinking of the *Lusitania*.